APERTO·VIVERE·VOTO
AVXILIVM·MEVM·IN·DOMINO
TOVT·JOVRS·PREST
18 78
CHARLES ARTHVR WYNNE FINCH

C. W. G. Wynne.

Poplas.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/simplicityfascin00beal_1

SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION;

OR,

GUARDIANS AND WARDS.

By ANNE BEALE,

AUTHOR OF

THE BARONET'S FAMILY,' 'THE VALE OF THE TOWEY,' ETC. ETC.

"This small inheritance my father left me
Contenteth me, and is worth a monarchy.
I seek not to wax great by others' waning,
Or gather wealth, I care not with what envy;
Sufficeth, that I have maintains my state,
And sends the poor well pleased from my gate."

Henry VI. Part II.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1855.

PRINTED BY

JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR, LITTLE QUEEN STREET,

LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Thus with the year
Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks or herds, or human face divine;
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
Presented with an universal blank
Of Nature's works, to me expunged and rased,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out."

MILTON.

JESSIE was sitting one evening at the aforementioned work and studies, when Pynsent returned home bringing a letter for her. It was from Tiny, and its contents greatly alarmed both the brother and sister. It said—

"My dearest Jessie,

"My mother and I have just been to Duke-street, in the hope of seeing Mr. Barnard, who is,

you probably know, very ill. We have been to the house several times lately, but Mrs. Hicks has always sent us away, assuring us that her master was too ill to see any one. If we asked what was the matter with him, she always said that it was an attack of rheumatism, which made him very irritable. It was no use for us to beg her to say that we were there, as she would reply that he could not be disturbed then, but that she would give our messages when he awoke, or was able to listen to them. This has occurred five or six times. At last I got so very, very anxious, that I was determined to waylay the doctor. I went therefore early to Duke-street alone, for mother was too poorly to linger about, and fortunately soon saw a gentleman leaving the house, who I thought might be a physician, by his appearance. His carriage was at the door, and Mrs. Hicks was waiting to see him off. I trembled all over, but it was my only chance; so I took courage, and when the door closed, and the carriage was driving away, I called to the coachman to stop. I told him that I wanted to speak particularly to the gentleman, who immediately put his head out, and begged me to come into the carriage, as he was in a hurry. I did so, and he kindly answered all my inquiries about your dear uncle. He said that he had been

one of the most active medical men in London during this awful cholera, and that he had not spared himself night or day. Although he had not taken the dreadful disease, he had so overtasked his strength, and his mind had been so upset by the scenes he had witnessed, that he was taken dangerously ill. It seemed a general cold and weakness through his system—a kind of influenza,—but unfortunately it has settled in his head and eyes, so that he is nearly blind. The doctor told me that his sight was never very good, and had been much injured by long study and attention to his profession. You know, my dear Jessie, that he once told you that he had a kind of fear of cataract. If he recovers from this illness, he *may* be blind for life. The doctor did not say *must*, but *may*, so there is hope. God grant it may be hopeful hope, and not despairing hope, such as I feel for my poor mother! When I had told the doctor how good Mr. Barnard had been to me, and that I knew all his relations, he said that he was astonished that none of you came to him at such a time. Mrs. Hicks had written frequently, and he had left notes to be enclosed in hers, but still the good, excellent, best of men (so he called him) was left to die alone. Your uncle frequently asked whether any one had come from

Fairfield, and excuses were made to account for your silence and absence, which seemed to trouble him, although he was too weak to think or talk much about anything. Mrs. Hicks managed the house, and attended to him entirely; and, the doctor added, thoroughly did her duty. Now I feel assured that either these letters have never been sent, or you have never received them. At least I think you would have been with Mr. Barnard by this time, had you known how dangerously ill he has been. It is of no use for us to ask to be allowed to see him again, because Mrs. Hicks does not choose that we should do so. I hope you will come to London, and if you have time, be so very kind as to let me hear from you—"

"We must start instantly," here interrupted Pynsent: "there has been either some infamous deceit, or great mistake."

"Certainly," said Jessie; "there is not one moment to lose. You had better go over at once to Uncle James, ask Aunt Betsey to take care of little Chatham, and see what they say about the matter. Meanwhile I will pack up some clothes ready for the mail tomorrow morning."

Pynsent found his uncle and aunt, as he expected, in the parlour—become, by the taste and management of the latter, almost a modern draw-

ing-room: it would have been quite one, but for the extreme regularity of the chairs and tables, and the stiffness of the ornaments. Aunt Betsey was sitting, as usual, by the fire, knitting, dignified as ever, and very handsomely dressed; Uncle James was seated by her side, a round table before him, on which was the newspaper that he had been reading, but which had been laid down to enable him the better to reply to some question of Aunt Betsey's upon the politics of the day. His spectacles were pushed back upon his forehead, to give him the advantage of seeing her with his natural vision, and his hand rested on the arm of her chair. He was quite as rubicund, portly, and good-humoured as ever. Perhaps both he and his wife looked younger than they did some five years ago, when we took leave of them on their marriage day: certain it is that they looked happier. Uncle James's blue coat and yellow buttons, broad-frilled shirt, yellow waistcoat and kerseymere inexpressibles and gaiters were of the same materials as heretofore, but they were now of the most scrupulous cleanliness and neatness, fitted perfectly, and were put on with a decided view to becomingness. The thick curly hair, but slightly grizzled, was brushed and oiled into smoothness, and the large brown hands were guiltless of dirt.

This was all voluntary homage to Aunt Betsey. She had never found it necessary to exert argument,—influence was sufficient. She sat in the parlour of an evening, because she preferred it; Uncle James, contrary to former custom, did so for the same reason, and enjoyed it. The Hall chimney-corner was left for his dogs. He had lost none of his bluff hospitality, or ready kindliness, only it was softened in her presence. To him she was always the Miss Betsey Burton of old days. The adoration and reverence that he had felt for her for thirty or forty long years before he married, did not change when he had the happiness of possessing his treasure, simply because she did not change.

Aunt Betsey was as stately, genteel, precise, and proud in her married, as she had been in her maiden state. She was every day becoming more satisfied with her husband, as he became more gentlemanlike under her influence. She was even nurturing a kind of affection for him, which might, in the course of years, by the time he was seventy, ripen into as much love as she was capable of feeling for any person not decidedly patrician. She managed her house well, and had so awed his half-wild domestics by her stately gravity, that they had become tame animals in the house, and crouched

before her as such; abusing her, after the manner of Dinah at Fairfield, behind her back. The old Grange was turned from a huge farm-house, once more into the manor-house which it originally was; and its master and mistress into the country gentleman and lady of the old school. Pynsent and Jessie looked with the utmost astonishment upon the two oldest representatives of the Burtons and Barnards. The former declared that Ovid's Metamorphoses were nothing to Uncle James and his house, and set to wondering what there could be in the mere influence of Love, the passion he despised, to effect such changes. And he could not but acknowledge that they were for the better. Even Aunt Betsey was vastly improved. He began to think that marriage must be the most honourable and natural state after all; since it could convert an Uncle James into a pattern man, and an Aunt Betsey into something endurable, which she never was, and never would have been, as an old maid. In short the much-dreaded, much-laughed-at, much-reprehended marriage of this middle-aged couple had turned out the happiest thing possible for everybody belonging to them; and all that could be said by the lookers-on was "that wonders would never cease." I wish all the old bachelors and old maids in the country would follow their example.

and make matches, suitable in age; instead of either rendering themselves miserable by marrying young girls, on the one hand; or vegetating alone in ill-managed gardens of bitter herbs on the other.

"Dang my buttons!" said Uncle James, "but if that woman ought not to be flayed alive! I beg your pardon, my dear," turning apologetically to his wife, "but isn't it too bad?"

"Too bad, indeed," said Mrs. Barnard with a severe air.

These animadversions were lavished upon Mrs. Hicks, when Pynsent had read Tiny's letter.

"We must all set off at once," said Uncle James, "all of us,—don't you think so, my dear?"

"Not exactly; I cannot see the utility of such a proceeding. What do you think, Pynsent?"

"I agree with you, Aunty. If you would take little Chatham here, and let Jessie and me go—"

"And leave me at home, Sir,—his own brother!" exclaimed Uncle James. "Well, to be sure! the young people of this generation do think themselves wiser than their elders. What do you think, Ma'am?"

"My dear Mr. Barnard, you are your own master."

"I beg your pardon, my dear. When you did me the honour to marry me, I ceased to be my

own master, and willingly allowed myself to be governed. Nevy Pynsent, your Aunt shall decide."

"Let me say my say first, Uncle. Jessie must go to nurse Uncle Timothy; I should like to watch his symptoms day and night, under abler hands, therefore to go also: but we cannot leave the child at home. If Aunt Betsey would take care of him, perhaps the farm and the patients would take care of themselves: and of course you could do as you like. But Aunty is the chief person to be consulted, on account of little Chatham."

"Oh, the child may come here, Pynsent, if you think he is at all tractable. He is a sweet child, and the picture of Anna."

Another metamorphosis! Pynsent expected a world of opposition, and Aunt Betsey yielded at once. He was so delighted that he actually kissed his aunt,—a favour that he rarely bestowed upon her; which voluntary action occasioned Uncle James to give him a most hearty slap upon the back, and to call him a confounded young puppy.

"With your leave, my dear," he said, "I must go to Lunnun with the young folks. If anything was to happen to Brother Timothy, I should never forgive myself. Bless my soul! didn't he come all the way from Lunnun to see Jessie when I asked him, and didn't he come to our wedding—the

proudest day of my life? and shall I delay to go to see him when he is sick? What do you say, my dear?"

"I think you should go, Mr. Barnard, decidedly, though it will be lonely here without you."

Uncle James actually kissed his wife's hand, in token of the pleasure he felt at her expressing her fears of being lonely without him.

"Ah, Pynsent, my boy, marry! There's a pattern lady for you, Sir! I never knew happiness before, Sir. Go and seek for the counterpart of your beautiful Aunt, boy, and marry!"

"Where shall I find her, Uncle? But are you quite decided to go?"

"Quite: tomorrow, by mail. Blind! that isn't possible, is it, Pynsent? Timothy blind! I don't believe that, and I won't believe it, anyhow."

"I hope not," said Pynsent. "Then, Aunty, will you come and fetch Chatham. He is very entertaining now, and will, I think, prevent your feeling dull during our absence. We will write constantly."

"I shall make a point of writing every day, my dear," said Uncle James proudly, who had never written half-a-dozen letters in his life, with the exception of the daily bulletins during the fever.

"Tomorrow, at the Inn, then, Uncle: we had

better meet there. Good night. Thank you, Aunt Betsey, you are really kind," said Pynsent, as he made his exit. "There is more good in her, after all, than I fancied; perhaps there is in most people."

The following day, Uncle James, Pynsent, and Jessie started for London, which place they reached safely, and duly arrived at Mr. Timothy Barnard's house, in Duke-street. Mrs. Hicks had never seen Jessie before, and gave her a glance of anything but satisfaction, when she found that she had come on purpose to nurse her uncle. There was not much leisure for inquiries into the cause of Mrs. Hicks's silence respecting her master's illness, and that notable housekeeper declaring that she had written more than once, it seemed useless to press the subject. She insisted that her letters must have miscarried in some marvellous way, and inwardly wondered how the new comers could have been informed of Mr. Barnard's illness, as she had never written at all.

They did not think it wise to disturb the invalid at five o'clock in the morning, especially as Mrs. Hicks assured them that he was sleeping, and somewhat better; therefore they rested, for a couple of hours, on such sofas and beds as were available, whilst Mrs. Hicks prepared refreshment, and wished

them back again at Fairfield with all her heart. As early as appeared to them discreet, Pynsent went to the house of the physician, Dr. Manson, who attended his uncle, in order to make more particular inquiries concerning him, and to beg him to return with him to Duke-street. Dr. Manson appeared rejoiced to find that his patient's friends had arrived, and said that he thought the sooner he knew of their being in the house the better. He returned with Pynsent at once, giving him, *en route*, all the particulars of his uncle's indisposition. He had been ill for several weeks, and was still in danger of sinking from weakness; but the most alarming feature in his complaint was his total loss of sight. It seemed doubtful whether he would ever recover it, as cold had brought on inflammation, and a thick film had gathered over both eyes, which the celebrated oculist who had been called in, could not venture to remove in his present state, and the evil was hourly increasing.

Dr. Manson prepared Uncle Timothy for the arrival of his relations, and quitted the apartment as soon as he had whispered to his patient that his friends were near. The room was very nearly dark, and so indistinct was the outline of the bed, that they would scarcely have been able to make directly for it, had not a low sob from the dear rela-

tive upon it attracted them aright. Jessie advanced first, and leaning over the pillow, and pressing her quivering lips upon her uncle's face, murmured—

"We are here, my dear, dear Uncle."

"Thank God!" was the almost inaudible response, as he kissed his niece, and feebly returned the pressure of his brother's tender grasp.

They could not speak for some time, each trying to overcome emotions that ought not to burst forth. Uncle James's broad chest was heaving with suppressed feeling. He had not realized the possibility of his brother's being really as weak as an infant, and blind. He never had been able to realize misfortune until it came actually upon him; some few hopeful natures never can do so.

Uncle Timothy was the first to speak, at least to breathe words that Jessie was obliged to put her ear to his lips to hear.

"You are very good—God is merciful—you will stay now."

"We will not leave you, dear Uncle."

"We would have come sooner, but for that old—" began Uncle James.

"Hush!" whispered Pynsent: "there has been a mistake about letters, my dear Uncle, or we should have been with you long ago."

"All will be well now," said Jessie; "perhaps

you had better go to the doctor, Pynsent, and take Uncle James with you for a short time."

The pair quietly left the room, and Jessie sat awhile in silence by her uncle's bed, holding his thin hand in hers. Warm, fervent prayers were in her heart, and tears rolling fast down her cheeks. Tears too were in the film-covered eyes of her dear uncle, but he felt grateful and happy.

Mrs. Hicks came in with breakfast, and Uncle Timothy gently whispered, "Give it me yourself, my dear;" upon which Jessie took the tray, saying, with her usual consideration, to the housekeeper, "You will allow me to wait on my uncle today, it is so long since I have had the pleasure of doing so." Mrs. Hicks assented with a look that, it was fortunate for her, the darkness rendered invisible, and left the room in disgust.

Jessie was obliged to feed Uncle Timothy, he was so weak; and he took the nourishment at her hands with the submission of an infant, thankful that he had now some one of his kindred near him in his extremity. So it is always. Business, pleasure, science, any engrossing pursuit is sufficient to the mind in time of health, to the exclusion frequently of the ties of blood; but when sickness comes, and death seems to hover upon the threshold, the soul pants for the presence and love of

some one whom God and nature have appointed as a household ministering spirit. At such periods man acknowledges the wisdom and goodness of the Creator in implanting in the heart the love of kindred.

The first thing that Jessie did when she left her uncle's room, and was replaced therein by his brother and nephew, was to write to Tiny. She was careful to reserve her note to be posted by Pynsent, not feeling quite sure of Mrs. Hicks's probity in such matters. In the course of the afternoon Mrs. Eveleigh and Tiny arrived. They were both so much affected and excited, that it was some time before they could compose themselves. Mrs. Eveleigh particularly, who was in very delicate health, was so deeply moved as to induce Tiny to take her for a time to another room. She returned alone, to explain.

"My mother," she said, "is so weak, that she cannot bear the excitement of strangers, and we have been very anxious about Mr. Barnard, the more so as we could not hear the truth. And then it was so hard to suppose he might think we did not care for him. God knows we did. He has been our best friend for years, and if he were to die, my mother thought we should be alone in the world."

"What have you been doing all this time,

Tiny?" asked Jessie; "you are not well yourself."

"We have our little school, and we are able to take in needlework, and I give lessons in drawing to two little girls to whom my drawing-master recommended me. I am quite well."

Jessie looked at the child-woman with grave astonishment and pity. She was now nearly seventeen, but still so small and slight, that she scarcely looked more than twelve. There were the colourless face, the deep sad eyes, the mouth that seemed never to have smiled, of the Tiny of years gone by; but in addition there was the painful look that an overworked brain gives to the face of earnest womanhood. There was the wasted figure of one who had laboured too young and too anxiously; but still there was the finely-shaped head and forehead of genius. Shrinking and delicate as ever, she was even shy and reserved with Jessie, and it was with much effort that the latter succeeded in making her confess that she and her mother were frequently in distress.

"My dear Tiny," said Jessie, putting her arm round the trembling girl, and drawing her to her side on the sofa, "does Uncle Timothy still continue to assist you?"

"He would do so, but we would rather he did not," said Tiny, hesitating.

"Do you mean to say that you now live on your own resources?"

"People said that Mr. Barnard kept us, and we knew we had no right to be burdens upon his goodness; so my mother told him that we were now able to support ourselves, and so indeed we are."

"And has Uncle Timothy given you up?"

"Oh no, he has frequently sent us money in a way that we could not refuse; still we would prefer his not doing so, for Mrs. Hicks finds it out, and tells some friends she has near us, who tell the parents of some of our little scholars, and so we lose the children, or perhaps our needlework; and those who would be our friends look coldly on us. There is some mystery which I do not understand."

"And so," said Jessie, "you toil, I fear, beyond your strength?"

"Not more than I have seen you do, Jessie, nor half as much, every day of your life. Whenever I lose courage I think of you, and am comforted and strengthened. Besides, we do very well now. It is my own fault if I look pale. I cannot give up drawing, and I work at it whenever I have a spare hour."

"Is not your mother's health so bad as sometimes to prevent her working?"

"Very seldom; I tell her that she ought to refrain, but she is never idle as long as she is able to hold a needle or hear a child's lesson. I fear she suffers much very often, but she never complains. She is very good, and if it were not for me, would, I think, be glad to go to heaven, to my father."

Jessie looked with pity on the fair, fragile girl beside her, and wondered, as every one else does in such cases, what was to become of her, forgetting for the moment that the young and desolate are always the especial care of One who is powerful to shield. She felt herself strengthened and gratified by the thought that her own weak endeavours to do her duty had been encouragement to one following in the path of difficulty that she had trodden. They could not be long alone together, as Uncle Timothy sent to say he wished Mrs. Eveleigh and Tiny to come to him for a short space, which they did, and were so much affected by finding him so reduced, that when they left him it was with difficulty that Mrs. Eveleigh could compose herself at all. She felt that the life of the only true friend and benefactor she had was apparently soon to be sacrificed to the cause of humanity, and she could only think what would be her own desolation, and that of Tiny, when he was gone.

Pynsent proved the best comforter.

"I do not at all despair of my uncle, Madam," he said: "his recovery must be slow—his blindness, for some time at least, certain, but I have great hope that he may be spared."

"God bless you for the words, Sir!" said Mrs. Eveleigh; "we have suffered dreadful anxiety about him of late, and would have gladly come to nurse him if we had been allowed."

"Of that we have no doubt, and only wish you had been here; although we must be just enough to allow that Mrs. Hicks has not neglected him."

"Hang Mrs. Hicks!" said Uncle James, coming into the room suddenly. "Pynsent, Brother Timothy wants you. Well, my little Tiny, I suppose I am still a privileged old fellow, and may give you a kiss. You know I am married now. Don't tell Mrs. Barnard when you come to see us."

Uncle James took Tiny in his arms, as he used to do the Tiny of old, and would have seated her on his knee, had not the slight confusion of the shy girl awakened him to the consciousness of her being very nearly, if not quite a young woman.

"Dang my buttons, if the child isn't grown!" he exclaimed: "I never expected you to grow, my dear. But you are Tiny still," he added, stroking her hair, "and remember if you can't exactly keep

my house now, seeing I have got a—house—hem —wife, you can come and get rosy amongst us. You were always a favourite with Miss Betsey—Mrs. Barnard I mean."

"Thank you, Sir," said Tiny.

"Call me Uncle James, as you used, my dear; I hate being 'sirred.' And you, Ma'am: it might do you good to come into the country. Jessie, my dear, what do you think?"

"I am sure it would, Uncle, if Mrs. Eveleigh could come. I should be very glad to see her at Fairfield."

Mrs. Eveleigh could only answer by tears; and Tiny, perceiving that she looked faint and ill, proposed leaving. They were pressed to remain the day, but declined. Uncle James rang the bell.

"Tell the coachman to get my brother's carriage ready to take these ladies home," he said, as Mrs. Hicks appeared.

"Ladies, indeed!" muttered Mrs. Hicks, as she went, unwillingly enough, to do his bidding.

"Come whenever you can," said Jessie to Tiny. "I will go and see you also when I am able, and Pynsent shall visit your mother until Uncle Timothy is able to do so again."

"Thank you," murmured Tiny, as she pressed Jessie's hand.

"Another glass of wine, Ma'am, before you go," said Uncle James, resolutely putting the wine into Mrs. Evelcigh's hand. "And you too, Tiny; you must both of you drink Brother Timothy's recovery."

This could not be refused, and the health was drunk in silent prayers.

"Good bye, my dear; another kiss," said Uncle James, fumbling very much with something in his hand, which he at last managed to squeeze into Tiny's. "From Mrs. Barnard, my dear." It was a five pound-note. Uncle James always fancied he was made of money; so did Uncle Timothy; it was a family failing. "More in the bank to carry us home," he muttered to himself.

Tiny had no time to remonstrate. She was in the carriage, and on her way home, before she well knew what her good friend had done.

"It makes one melancholy to look at her," said Uncle James. "God help 'em, poor hearts! I wonder who they are, and how on earth Brother Timothy picked 'em up."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"But if there be one attribute divine
With greater lustre than the rest can shine,
'Tis goodness which we every moment see
The Godhead exercise with such delight;
It seems, it only seems to be
The best-beloved perfection of the Deity,
And more than infinite."—POMFRET.

SOME women seem to have been sent into this world on purpose to become nurses of the sick. They have an especial aptitude for the duty, and set about it as if they liked it. Jessie was one of them. She was evidently born not only for the nursing, but the healing art. Under her care Uncle Timothy made rapid progress, compared with his previous tardy steps. Pynsent also must have his share of credit. Patience and skill, helped on by affection, do wonders. The physician who attended his uncle complimented him highly, and thought it a pity his talents should be buried in a country practice. But a new world was opening before him, almost without his seeking it. Providence was working for him what duty and

affection had forbidden him to work for himself. The physician insisted on relinquishing to him the patients he had hitherto attended for his uncle, and he was thus thrown, at once, into an extensive London practice,—the very height of his ambition. But his youth! he knew that many patients who had been accustomed to his uncle's wig and cane would object to him because he had neither; and would look upon him as a doubtful doctor, even though he was simply a substitute. Moreover Pynsent was a sufficiently well-looking young man, with hair inclining to be curly and whiskers very decidedly crisp, and with a comical cast of countenance, that, even at its gravest, wore a smile—half satirical, half humorous. He was not handsome, nor would you have fallen in love with him at first sight, fair ladies; yet, had you sound good sense and discrimination, you might have felt disposed to do so on an intimate acquaintance. Some of you will wonder why we talk of his youth, and may remind us that he must be past thirty. But that is young compared with Uncle Timothy, and he looked younger than he was.

"Miss Primmerton has sent for Mr. Barnard, Ma'am," said Mrs. Hicks, addressing Jessie in a whisper, who was standing at one end of her uncle's room, whilst Pynsent was sitting by his

bedside talking to him. Uncle Timothy overheard.

"Miss Primmerton!" he said. "You had better ask Dr. Manson. You are too young. She is very particular."

"To come directly, Sir, as one of the young ladies is very ill," said Mrs. Hicks.

"Lend me your coat and wig, Uncle," said Pynsent. "Mrs. Hicks, where are the coat and wig?"

"In that drawer, Sir," was the answer.

Pynsent was at the drawer in a moment, and had taken out those articles, before any one could interfere. Just as Jessie was exclaiming, "Do not be so foolish, Pynsent," and Uncle Timothy was laughing his very first laugh, he had put on the wig, and was putting on the coat.

"Now come with me, Jessie, into a lighter room, and see how I look," he said. "Stop a minute. Go downstairs to Uncle James, and I will arrange my attire before my mirror."

He left the room, followed by Jessie, exclaiming at his folly. She went to her Uncle James however, who was in the library, and after having been there a short time, was diverted at seeing Pynsent enter, transformed according to his professed intention. Still more diverted was she at seeing Uncle James rise ceremoniously, and with some

confusion at the sight of a stranger, as he supposed, make a low bow. To sustain the joke, Jessie rose, and, with a slight inclination of the body, placed a chair. Pynsent seated himself, studiously averting his face from his uncle. The pantomime continued a little space, when Uncle James, looking at Jessie, motioned her to speak. She shook her head. He found himself compelled to begin.

"I beg your pardon, Sir; perhaps you wish to see my brother. I am sorry to say he is very ill."

The stranger bowed his head.

"Could I take any message, Sir?"

No reply.

"The dickens is in it, he must be deaf and dumb," muttered Uncle James. "Jessie, suppose you call Pynsent."

Jessie could no longer keep her countenance. Uncle James looked more narrowly at the coat and wig.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed, in great alarm. "Brother! Brother Timothy! are you all mad?"

"Deaf and dumb, Uncle; that's all," said Pynsent, rising from his chair, and standing in an imposing attitude before his uncle.

"Dang my buttons, Sir, what's this! I declare you've frightened me out of a year's growth. Why you look fifty to a day."

"Then I shall just do for Miss Primmerton," said Pynsent.

"You could not be so absurd," said Jessie, laughing heartily, as she remarked the curious transformation made in her brother. He really did look years older, in the trim wig, under which he had, with some difficulty, pressed his hair, and the straight brown coat, into which he had compressed his body.

"I certainly shall go as I am. I have cut off a quantity of hair, which I must say I rather regret; but now the wig fits me admirably. I don't think either of the young ladies will fall in love with me. This wig may be worth five hundred a year to me,—who knows? Where is the gold-headed cane? There! now I am complete. Good morning to you, Ma'am;" and Pynsent made his exit with a low bow, entered his uncle's carriage, that was standing at the door, and drove off to Miss Primmerton's.

When he returned, Uncle James and Jessie both hastened to him to know the result.

"Capital!" said he. "I introduced myself as a nephew of Mr. Barnard's; said I was attending his patients for him during a severe illness; and was happy to have the honour of waiting on Miss Primmerton. You should have seen the bow I

made when I composed and delivered those last words. 'Nephew!' said Miss Primmerton incredulously: it was evident that politeness alone prevented her suggesting the possibility of my having made a mistake in my own identity, and being his grandfather: 'it is not possible that you can be Miss Anna Burton's brother?' I never thought of this relationship, but bowed my assent, and muttered something about considerable difference of age. However, I need not have feared; she evidently considered me quite safe. It was not flattering to think that a mere wig could make one look so old,—a wig, too, that really makes Uncle Timothy look young. I was half inclined to abjure it, when I saw the pretty young lady I was to do my best to cure. I made rather more fuss than was necessary, of course, about moving her from the quarters in which her companions slept, but did not think the fever likely to be infectious, and so quieted Miss Primmerton's fears in the blandest voice I could assume. It was so ridiculous! I could think of nothing but Anna's stories of Puss, and the Happy Family, and I quite longed to ask my pretty patient what *sobriquet* she bore. Miss Primmerton made many inquiries after Uncle Timothy and Anna, in both of whom she seemed really interested. She also

asked for you, Jessie; and when I told her you were in London, she expressed her intention of 'doing herself the pleasure of making your acquaintance.' I think of confiding in Miss Primmerton, that I may ask her to give me a few lessons in polite speaking. I am sure it would be a fortune to a medical man to get up a few of those well-turned periods, so essential to make an impression. Imagine the effect one might produce by such a phrase as, 'Allow me the honour of feeling your pulse;' or, 'Permit me to have a view of your tongue;' 'I trust your indisposition is beginning to abate;' 'I have extreme pleasure in communicating to you the delightful fact that you are out of danger.' But I must go and see Uncle Timothy, and then more patients. I never was so happy in my life."

"Because you never before were in your proper element," said Jessie, as her brother left the room. "Oh, Uncle! what a pity it is that he should be shut up in the country, when he does so long for an active London practice, and is really so well suited to it!"

"Ay, Jessie," said Uncle James, "I never thought so until this trip to London. He is quite another chap here: so brisk! in such capital spirits, and so much more agreeable! to say no-

thing of his learning. I was dumbfoundered the other day when I heard him and Dr. Manson disputing about some case they disagreed upon. Pyn didn't give in a bit, but stood his ground like a hero, and gave chapter and verse for all he argufied about, until Dr. Manson began to waver. Afterwards the Doctor said to me, 'That's a fine, clever, sensible fellow, that nephew of yours. He ought not to leave town. We want such clear-headed, active men here, and I should be very glad to give him a lift.'"

"And that from one of the cleverest men in England!" said Jessie. "He shall not return to Fairfield, if I can help it."

He did not return to Fairfield. Circumstances worked a change in Pynsent's destiny, which, whilst it was rejoiced in by all for his sake, was sadly deplored for that of his uncle. Mr. Barnard did not die; but so long and painful was his illness, that he could scarcely be said to recover. It left him, not only weakened in body and mind, but almost blind. As all the principal physicians and surgeons in London were his friends, so they all visited him as such, and, although not all professionally attentive to him, still most of them saw him from time to time, when he was able to admit them. There was but one opinion of his state when

he became convalescent, and that was, that the only chance of his recovering either health or sight was his relinquishing all professional duty, and leaving London until he regained them. He had worked too hard, both bodily and mentally, for thirty long years; and this severe illness had brought about at once what mere labour would in a few years have done without it—the prostration and exhaustion of overwrought faculties. He was as gentle as a child, and appeared to have also returned to his childhood. He frequently forgot the events that happened to him as yesterday, but had a keen remembrance of everything that had occurred at Fairfield from his boyhood. His interest in his profession had abated, and he seemed quite willing, and even pleased, that Pynsent should take his position. When it was proposed to him to return with his brother and niece to Fairfield, and to allow his nephew to remain in his place for a time, he pressed Jessie's hand, and said, smiling, that it was the very thing he wished; that he was good for nothing now but to feed her poultry, and to wander about the old place. He forgot, for the moment, that he was nearly blind.

And so it was settled; but there was much to arrange before the change of plans could take place. With her usual prudence, Jessie proposed that the

state of her uncle's affairs should be looked into before Pynsent entered upon what might possibly be a permanent engagement, in a sphere so new to him. Little satisfactory intelligence could be gained from Uncle Timothy, beyond the fact that he had never saved money. The world looked upon him as a rich man, but his riches were, literally as well as figuratively, laid up "in the kingdom of heaven." There he must have had a large store, since all the proceeds of his very considerable profession had been spent in charity as he received them. Every year he had intended to lay by a portion of his income for his nephews and nieces, and his little *protégée* Tiny, but each year had brought its customary demands on his purse, and he never found that he had more than enough money to pay his annual subscriptions, daily charities, and the expenses of his household. The latter, upon examination, were found to have been enormous; and there was little doubt but that his apparently faithful old servants had been making their fortunes, whilst he was spending his. There were a great many book-debts, which, if paid, would realize a considerable sum of money; and there were the house and furniture, both of which were Mr. Barnard's private property: and this was all.

It took some weeks to come to a clear under-

standing of these matters, but it was, at last, arrived at. Uncle Timothy's health was too precarious and too precious to admit of his being much consulted, and he was not a man of business beyond his profession. Fortunately he had been always most particular in his professional accounts, though not in sending them in. When they tried gently to make him understand the state of his affairs, he begged them to do what was best, and when he began work again, he said, he would begin to put by for a rainy day. He did not seem to have the slightest regard for money, and only regretted his carelessness because it prevented his providing for Tiny, and continuing his allowance to Charles.

"Mrs. Hicks, too," he said, "poor Mrs. Hicks! what is to become of her?"

"Brother, you must be a baby and an innocent!" said Uncle James, letting escape the wrath that had long been bottled up; "did not Mrs. Hicks leave us in ignorance of your illness, because she had good reasons for wishing to keep you all to herself? has she not made a fortune by you? Dang my buttons, if there hasn't been bread and meat enough in your house in one year to keep Fairfield, labourers and all! Jessie says so. Where do you think it has gone? Oh! bachelors ought to

marry. I never knew the necessity of matrimony till I had the happiness of taking my excellent wife for better for worse. I have saved a fortune already, Tim; and as soon as you get well, we will look you out a wife: between ourselves, I believe Mrs. Hicks had her eye upon you!"

"Brother! Brother!" said Uncle Timothy, with such a hopeless tone of voice that Jessie interfered to prevent mischief.

In due course of time they were rid of Mrs. Hicks; her tears and protestations were tremendous, when she received a civil but decided notice from Jessie, who told her that, as her uncle was going into the country, and his affairs were in a very unsettled state, he would not need her services any longer. Finding that Jessie was not to be bought over by assurances of attachment, she rushed up to her master, and asked if it was his intention to part with his faithful servant, who had lived only for him for so many years.

"My good Mrs. Hicks!" interjected Uncle Timothy; "perhaps when I am better—"

"Odds boddikins, Ma'am! are you mistress in my brother's house, or his niece?" began Uncle James.

"Uncle!" said Pynsent, who was fortunately present. "Now, Mrs. Hicks, you will be so good as

to come with me, and we will just talk matters over quietly," turning to that offended matron, and gently but firmly taking her out of the room into a dressing-room. Closing the door, he continued in a matter-of-fact way:—"You see, Mrs. Hicks, that, from various wonderful causes, my uncle's affairs are in a bad way. For a single man, we think he has lived, to say the least, very extravagantly; but I suppose he kept a great deal of company: am I right, Mrs. Hicks?"

"Hem! I cannot say that my master ever gave large parties," said Mrs. Hicks evasively.

"At all events," continued Pynsent quietly, "his housekeeping has cost him enormous sums, and it may be found necessary to make more minute inquiries,—for our satisfaction, you understand, as well as for yours,—into the various ways in which they have been spent. You perceive, Mrs. Hicks, that he will not require a housekeeper at—fifty pounds a year, is it not?—when he will perhaps not have more than a hundred for himself. You understand?"

"Perfectly, Sir. I am sure I never could have believed! I declare I am heart-broken! Only to think! and everybody thought him as rich as ever could be. Poor gentleman! and when do you think he will go into the country, Sir? and when

do you suppose I had better leave? I am at the commands of the family, I am sure; only, as a lone woman, you see, I must have an eye to myself."

"Precisely, Mrs. Hicks. As the French proverb says, 'We should have one eye in town, and the other in the country;' do you think you could manage to keep one eye in Somersetshire, and the other in London?"

Mrs. Hicks did not quite know what to make of Pynsent. "Whatever you think best, I am sure, Sir; but you see, I am a lone woman, a widow, and must set myself up in some small way: I should never have the heart to take another situation. My poor, dear master!"

Thereupon Mrs. Hicks began to cry.

"We will not talk longer upon this painful subject, Mrs. Hicks," said Pynsent; "I see it is too much for you; but you will just look over your account-book—for your own satisfaction—and let us have some idea of the yearly housekeeping expenses. By the way, Mrs. Hicks, was the person you sent the letters to the post by trustworthy? it was so odd that so many miscarried. Will you tell me who was your messenger?"

"Dear Sir! I can't remember exactly; I was in such a fluster all day long. Poor master so ill! I often ran with 'em myself, or gave 'em to anybody I could see."

"Rather careless, considering your experience and years, Mrs. Hicks. Will you excuse my just calling my sister? whilst we are upon business, I think she has a question or two to ask."

Pynsent called Jessie, who came immediately.

"Mrs. Hicks quite understands the necessity of leaving, Jessie," said he; "but I thought you might wish to make those inquiries before she does so, and there is nothing like the present time."

"It is about Miss Eveleigh," said Jessie; "I wish to know upon what grounds you speak disparagingly of her and her mother, and why you prevented them from seeing my uncle?"

"'Miss' indeed!" said Mrs. Hicks in a tone of extreme disdain; but suddenly changing her tactics, she added, "I should think it beneath me, Ma'am, to talk of them kind of people. Nobody knows nothing of 'em, and I am of opinion they are no great things."

"But if you know nothing of them," said Jessie, "how can you form any opinion of them?"

"Wasn't they supported by master, Ma'am, in a most unbecoming way?"

"I suppose that was your master's affair, Mrs. Hicks," said Pynsent, for the first time waxing warm; "and I wish you to know that there are such things as actions for slander. I have been

once or twice to see Mrs. Eveleigh professionally, and some few other of my uncle's poor patients in that locality, and I have had some hints that not only Mrs. and Miss Eveleigh's names, but also that of my uncle, have been disrespectfully mentioned, and that in quarters where you are well known. I have no doubt that your attachment for my uncle will lead you to contradict all reports to his discredit; and if you have no opportunity of doing so, I shall certainly employ legal means to discover the real authors of the slander."

"I am sure I knows nothing about it," said Mrs. Hicks, "and never wishes to see either of them females any more."

"Very probably not," said Pynsent, resuming his calm decision; "still you may see the friends you have in the neighbourhood, and simply give them to understand there can be no foundation for the vile reports concerning my uncle and Mrs. and Miss Eveleigh. Also, that I, as his nephew, and representative for the time being, will take sure means of putting a stop to them, if their circulators do not. You understand, Mrs. Hicks?"

"Certainly, Sir," was the reply of that worthy, who suddenly turned very pale.

"I think we have nothing more to say at present," said Pynsent, "therefore need not detain you."

Mrs. Hicks made a very hasty exit, and not many days afterwards finally quitted the house. Her excuse for her sudden departure was the shattered state of her nerves, and as nothing better was desired by the household, she was permitted to take her leave unmolested. She paid her master a farewell visit, and expended a due proportion of salt-water on the occasion. He, poor man! repeated his hope that, when he came back, she might return to him. In the course of a few months she might have been seen presiding in a neat cook-shop, of which she was mistress, and the contents of which were doubtless feathers plucked from her good master's plumage. Let her pass: domestic servants are no longer what they were in less free-and-easy times.

The house in Duke-street was let furnished for a lodging-house, by the year, and Pynsent was to be the first lodger. He rented the parlours,—in other words, his uncle's dining-room and library,—and a couple of good airy bedrooms at the top of the house. The rent was thus secured to his uncle, and would prevent his feeling dependent during his residence at Fairfield. Thus was Pynsent suddenly launched upon the great London sea, to make a voyage after fame and fortune, which he had long desired to undertake, but had

never before ventured upon. He had moreover to begin the voyage on his own resources, and without any extraneous aid either of money or recommendation, since his Uncle Timothy was in no state to leave him anything but his own good name,—an honourable legacy, it is true, and one that stood him in good stead.

The most painful thing connected with this general change in the family plans and prospects was the leaving Tiny behind, deprived of the only protector that she had in the world. The last interview was a very melancholy one. During her stay in London, Jessie had managed to add greatly to the happiness, not only of Tiny, whom she loved, but of Mrs. Eveleigh, whom she sincerely pitied. She had been to see them several times, and, without appearing to notice anything particularly, had taken good account of the straitened circumstances in which they were placed. She had had them with her as much as possible, and by various manœuvres had done her best to aid them. But Jessie's means were very small, and it was impossible to draw any longer on her Uncle Timothy, as, during the settlement of his affairs, no fresh expenses could be incurred.

"You will write to us whenever you are in trouble or difficulty, my dear Tiny," said Jessie

the day before she was to leave London, "and whenever you can get away, you will come to us."

Tiny sat quietly in a shadowy corner of the library, her hair falling over a face as pale and delicate as a snowdrop. She did not answer, for she could not; but no trace of emotion was visible on her countenance: she had been long accustomed to conceal her feelings.

"Come to the Grange, my dear, and bring your mother with you," said Uncle James; "we will put some colour into your cheeks."

"Thank you, Sir," was the reply, "but my mother could not well bear a long journey, and I cannot leave her."

"Promise me, Tiny," said Jessie, "that you will not hesitate to send for Pynsent whenever you want advice or help. I assure you that he would be most glad to go to you at any time. You know you are quite one of us, dear, and must therefore treat us as brothers and sisters."

"I will! I will!" said Tiny.

Here Uncle James suddenly left the room.

"Tiny," said Jessie, "is there anything in the world I can do for you?"

"Nothing! nothing! I fear—I think—my poor, poor mother will not live long; and then—and then—" Here Tiny burst into tears.

Jessie felt that the words were but too true She rose, and folded the poor girl in her arms. "And then, love, you can come to us for comfort, as well as to One who will never forsake you."

"I could not burden you, Jessie, who have already much anxiety; but I will earn my bread and my poor mother's as long as she lives."

"Tiny, is your mother very irritable? Forgive my asking, but there seems a something—a degree of unkindness—sometimes in her manner to you, that is unaccountable."

"Oh!" said Tiny, hesitating, "it is scarcely unkindness. She is very ill; she does not know what she says; and when we are without money, she sometimes hints that were it not for me she might have been differently circumstanced. But the next moment she repents, and begs me to forgive her hastiness. Another thing annoys her: she cannot bear to see me paint. She says it is not only loss of time, but that it ruins my health; and, Jessie, to give up painting would be to give up half my life. If your brother Charles were here, he could understand me, but no one else can. It is really more than meat and drink to me. I suppose I inherit it from my father, who was, you know, an artist; but I cannot help it. If you would ask your brother to name me to any one

who wants a drawing mistress, should he have an opportunity, I might make money by my art. The little pupils that I had, have left the neighbourhood, and I have now no recommendation, in my mother's eyes, to pursue the study. She says it half killed my father, and will kill me. I almost wish it would: it would be a happy death to die painting a fine picture."

Jessie looked on the apparently passionless face of the young artist with astonishment. There was little outward symptom of the fire within: a bright ray from the deep eye, as she uttered the last sentence, was all the sign of enthusiasm that she betrayed.

"I wish I could make you happy, Tiny," Jessie said.

"I try to be contented, and am thankful," she replied, "but my soul will soon be alone again, now you are going; but I must return to my mother, and I have not seen your uncle. Oh, Jessie! Jessie! I cannot bid him good-bye, I cannot!"

"Only for a time, dear; and you know not yet what the Almighty may have in store for you. It will all be made clear to you if you trust in Him."

"I do, Jessie, but my faith is young, and it sometimes wavers. I suppose it is hard for those

to believe wholly who see little but the dark side of things. Shall we go to your uncle?"

This abrupt termination of the conversation led Jessie to perceive, what she had more than once done before, even in the childhood of the unfortunate Tiny, a degree of self-command that was very remarkable. No sooner did she appear to be about to give way to feeling of any kind, than she checked, by some strong mental effort, the inclination to do so, and became instantly calm and passionless as a statue. The reason of this Jessie guessed. Tiny had the artist temperament,—strong feelings by nature, great talents, and acute sensibility: but Mrs. Eveleigh had none of this, and had neither understood nor encouraged it in her young charge. She was a matter-of-fact, everyday woman, who was, happily for herself, contented when she had food and raiment, and desirous to see Tiny contented also. As she thought, for her good, she discouraged all notions in Tiny that she considered likely to raise her mind above her station in life; and she looked upon painting, as a profession, as certain starvation. Thus Tiny had been compelled all her life to restrain every thought or feeling that rose beyond Mrs. Eveleigh's daily atmosphere, and to keep them concealed in her own breast.

It was dreadful to see them burst forth. Poor child! in vain was all her self-command and resolution when she went to bid farewell to her benefactor: they were quite overcome. Uncle Timothy also, who had acquired almost paternal feelings towards the child who had been cast upon his bounty, was scarcely less moved.

He was sitting in an easy-chair, and looked very pale and feeble. The room was partially darkened, and a large green shade veiled his kind grey eyes. Pynsent was by his side when Jessie and Tiny entered the room, and Uncle James was vainly endeavouring to read the newspaper by the crevice in the half-opened shutter.

"Tiny is come to see you," whispered Jessie, as she pushed a low seat close to her uncle, for the service of his young friend.

Tiny was soon seated, and her small hand clasped in the thin, white fingers of the invalid. Placed as they both were in shadow, they looked like two pale spectres in an old picture. Jessie stood behind her uncle's chair, and Pynsent sat looking with interest at Tiny, through the hand that shaded his eyes. Tiny could not speak, but thoughts of future sorrow were busy in her mind. She felt as if her best friend—almost her only friend—was about to be removed from her for ever.

"If I do not come to you, you must come to me, Tiny," said Uncle Timothy; "remember, you belong to us."

A low sob was the only answer. Jessie feared that her uncle might be excited by any demonstrations of emotion, and whispered to Tiny that perhaps she had better not remain. She rose, and, bending over her benefactor, murmured, "I must go;" and then, after a moment's pause, "Thank you, thank you for all!" Uncle Timothy put his arm round her, and kissed her tenderly, retaining her for a short time in his embrace; he then said "God bless you, my love!" and released her.

Tiny hurried out of the room, followed by Jessie, and went down into the library. Here she buried her face in the pillows of the sofa, and sobbed violently. Grief was stronger for once than her self-command. The sobs were followed by hysterics, and the hysterics were accompanied by slight convulsions, that greatly alarmed Jessie. She called Pynsent, who administered the usual remedies, but did not succeed in quieting the convulsions for some time. It was most painful to see her wring her hands and turn her eyes upwards, as if supplicating help; and to hear her low sobs or groans, as if actual agony were tearing her

heart. As soon as some degree of consciousness returned, Pynsent spoke to her gently but firmly, and told her that she must gain the victory over herself. "I will! I will!" she said, with an effort that brought the blood to her pale cheeks, and caused her to clench her teeth and hands. Pynsent was almost frightened at seeing the effects of his words. As if by a miracle, the convulsions ceased suddenly, and the slight form and the pale young face became almost rigid.

"I am sorry—forgive me!" were the first words; and there was no longer any visible emotion in the countenance.

"Speak to her kindly—make her cry," he whispered to Jessie.

Jessie put her arms round her, kissed her, and let her own warm tears fall on her face.

"Dearest Tiny! dear child!" she said, "Uncle Timothy is better; God will spare him to us. I will write to you, and Pynsent will go and see you frequently, will you not, Pynsent?"

"If Tiny will let me," said Pynsent, taking the poor child's hand and pressing it affectionately. "You and your mother must look upon me as your uncle now, Tiny; you have no idea how respectable and old I look in the wig."

The real affection and tenderness of Jessie, and

the evident sympathy and goodwill of Pynsent, produced the desired effect. The attempt at thanks for the offer, and smile at the jest of the latter, brought the burst of tears that was so necessary to relieve the burdened heart. Tiny wept long in her friend's arms, who, understanding her nature well, did not try to comfort her. Pynsent left left them until he thought Tiny must have recovered, and then returned with a glass of wine, which he insisted on her drinking.

"You must come and see me, Tiny," he said, "when I am housekeeper, and report to Jessie how I behave myself. And now, if you really must return home today, perhaps you had better let me escort you. Is not London making me gallant already? My smart new Hansom is not ready yet, and—and!—we have put down our carriage; so you must take part in a cab for this once. It is smarter than the Fairfield car, after all."

Tiny and he departed, and he did not leave her until he had placed her safely under Mrs. Eveleigh's protection, and recomended that good lady to keep her as quiet and as much at ease as she could, for a day or two. He also left various nostrums for both, and promised to repeat his visit as soon as possible.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"How they so softly rest,
All, all the holy dead,
Unto whose dwelling-place
Now doth my soul draw near!
How they so softly rest,
All in their silent graves,
Deep to corruption
Slowly down-sinking."

TRANSLATED FROM KLOPSTOCK.

A FEW months after Pynsent's installation into all the honours and solitariness of bachelorhood, he might have been seen, after a hard day's work, reposing at his ease in his uncle's arm-chair. He was looking very thoughtful, and, for him, sentimental. But before we glance into his mind, and see, with our magic glass, what is passing there, we will inform the reader of his professional prospects. They are decidedly favourable. The greater portion of his uncle's regular patients have quietly transferred themselves to his care, and do not seem to be conscious of having made

a change for the worse. He is a favourite with most of them, and has already gained some reputation for skill amongst his brethren of the faculty. It is not to be supposed that he has stepped at once into his uncle's profession: far from it—he has to work his way like the rest of the world; but, the name of Barnard being famous, and Duke-street still besieged with applications for advice, Pynsent naturally becomes more readily known than most men making a start in the London world. When his uncle is sent for, he goes as his deputy; is clever, liked, and consequently employed. In short, he is getting on. Amongst the poor he is as great a favourite as his uncle was, and as much called upon for his aid. He does not refuse it, and may now as frequently be seen amidst the dark alleys of crowded London as he was formerly in the cottages of the country poor.

But on this particular evening Pynsent feels lonely. Although he likes his profession, he does not like visiting, or care over-much for play-going or sight-seeing; so he stays at home, and wonders *why* he feels so solitary. He has just received good accounts from Fairfield. All are getting on comfortably there, and Uncle Timothy is gaining health, though not, as yet, eyesight. As he has

some portion of strength of mind and character, he takes himself to task thus :—

"And am I, Pynsent Burton, going to make a fool of myself at thirty-five years of age, when I was able to conquer my inclinations at twenty-five?—I, who have always declared love to be a passion, when carried to excess, beneath the dignity of man? And what is carrying it to excess? Letting it make you do what reason and common sense condemn. Had I given way to it years ago, I might have induced the nicest girl I ever knew to sacrifice herself to me, perhaps—but no; I do not think she cared for me, or she would not have married so soon. However, had I succeeded, I should have acted dishonourably by taking advantage of the inexperience of a young girl who was visiting under my own roof, and who was above me both in fortune and position. Thank God, I was spared that shame. I was heartily proud of my victory over the universal passion, and felt sure that, once gained, I should never need to fight the battle again. Shame on thee for a coward, Pynsent Burton! Thou art yielding once more to the enemy. I cannot go to visit a poor invalid mother, and watch the virtuous exertions and tender beauty of her child, without falling in love! Tush! I hate the vulgar term!

And she only seventeen! And I have had her in my arms when I was a man and she almost an infant. It is too absurd. And yet I cannot look upon her without monstrous and ridiculous emotion. I never saw such endurance, talent, and loveliness united in a human being: she is as good and patient as Jessie, with the addition of a grace that is absolutely divine. Bah! I am getting worse than sentimental. A child! a mere child! This morning, when she asked me, with that sad voice, and sadder face, whether there were any hope, and seemed to hang upon my answer as if her life were in my power, I had almost asked her to be my wife. I, a poor surgeon, struggling for my uncle, without a profession or a penny of my own; and she, a girl whose very birth seems uncertain, for I am persuaded she cannot be Mrs Eveleigh's daughter. I suppose I have some of that cursed family pride in me after all; for I could not marry a girl of doubtful birth. Jessie always said I was proud, and so, it seems, I am. Still Tiny, with her talents, dignity, and grace, might become a coronet. And I, a poor surgeon, hesitate to marry her! What strange anomalies we are! But I cannot marry any one, so why should I debate the point. When poor Mrs. Eveleigh is gone, Tiny must go to Fairfield, and

they will take care of her there. Though I doubt whether her pride would allow her to be dependent on any one. There it is again! Pride! pride! turn where one will. Alas! poor human nature!"

It is impossible to say where Pynsent's soliloquy might have taken him next, but it was suddenly interrupted by the bursting open of the door and the rushing in of a tall young man.

"Charles!"

"Pynsent!"

"My dear fellow!"

"My dear brother!"

Tiny, pride, marriage, and everything else was forgotten in the warm pressure of the hand and hearty greeting that followed these interjectional exclamations. Charles had returned, after five or six years of absence, and it was no wonder that there was no need of further soliloquy.

Charles, at five-and-twenty, is no longer the pale, timid boy we remember him. Pale to be sure he is still, but firm and manly. More than ever does his countenance bear the stamp of toil and intellect. The hard study of five years is clearly seen in his thin cheeks and bright, but somewhat hollow, eyes, and in the early commencement of those straight lines of thought between the eyebrows and in the forehead. The

pursuit, night and day, of the art he loves has not increased his stature, but it has given an air of decision and dignity to his carriage and manner that the love of the great and beautiful must always give. The slight lameness is still perceptible, that sad legacy of the fever; but scarcely could any one who loved him wish it away: it makes him seem so much more gentle and sensitive than any one else. But his heart is resolved and bold enough. As a soldier for his country, so would he battle for the noble profession he has chosen. An historical painter! Is there any *more* noble? To put upon canvas for immortality the actions of the great and good, the heroic deeds of history, or the divine conceptions of the poet? Such is the work Charles Burton has to do, and he is doing it with all his might.

"I have already a reputation abroad," he said, when an hour had been passed in receiving details of home and family history, and his own plans were brought forward by his brother; "and I will soon earn one at home. I have paintings now with me that must, without injustice, demand a place in the Royal Academy, and I am returned in time for this year's competition. You shall not see them, Pynsent, until they stand in the place where they ought to stand. I was offered a

hundred and fifty guineas in Italy for my picture, but I could not sacrifice the hope of an English reputation for base gold."

"My dear fellow, you will find that metal very useful by-and-by," said Pynsent. "You will have fairly to support yourself now by your profession, and must try to look upon things in a business point of view."

"I have patrons amongst the most noble of our countrymen whom I met in Italy, and who have promised to stand by me whilst I pursue the branch of art I have chosen."

"Don't trust to patrons, my dear fellow: they will turn their backs upon you at the first jeer or frown of a Royal Academician. We must stand by ourselves in this world, as we are sure to fall by ourselves. Success makes the man. Few patrons will stick to you unless you succeed."

"Well," said Charles modestly, "I hope I have self-reliance enough to go my way without their aid, and rather than turn aside from the one great object of my life, I will starve."

"It would not take much to starve you, to judge by your present condition. But we can have bread and cheese together for the present, and there is a capital room vacant at the top of the house for a studio, the identical one you had

before you went abroad, and with a small bedroom next-door; but I think you had better run down into the country before you set to work again."

"Not until after the Royal Academy opens, and I know the fate of my pictures. We do not work fourteen hours a day, study the anatomy of the human frame like a doctor, live amongst the masterpieces of Italian and Dutch art for five or six years, and read like a student at college, to return home and revel in the country. Painting has been, and is, life to me. And Tiny—where and how is she? Does she show all the love of art she used to show?"

Pynsent was not given to blushing, yet he actually blushed at this sudden mention of a name that had of late fixed itself in his mind, in spite of his efforts to keep it out.

"She is much as she was," he said, "only seventeen or eighteen instead of twelve."

"Do you know I have been longing to see her for various reasons: in the first place, for her own sake, and in the second for painting's sake. She must have the very face for a picture I am about to paint."

"You may see her whenever you like, doubtless; but, with a dying mother, and poverty pressing hard, she is not in a likely condition to sit for a picture."

Charles's kind heart soon forgot his painting in sympathy with the child he loved. He questioned his brother concerning her, but was answered with so much taciturnity that he resolved to judge for himself as soon as possible.

And, whilst the night wears away happily in Duke-street, what is the said Tiny about? Let us proceed to Peckham and see.

She has just shaken up the pillows of poor Mrs. Eveleigh's armchair, and made her as comfortable as she can for the evening hours. She has swept up the hearth and trimmed the little fire, and, by drawing the curtains of the small window, has made the portrait-covered parlour look tolerably cheerful and warm. She has put a round table by Mrs. Eveleigh's side, and placed thereon some jelly and a few books, procured for them by the kindness of Pynsent, in addition to the workbox and work already disposed upon it. She has seated herself, and is preparing to sew a long seam of a shirt, whilst Mrs. Eveleigh languidly takes up the gussets of the same, and begins, as Hood says, "to sew them on in a dream."

"Mother," says Tiny anxiously, "pray do not work tonight. I can finish this shirt, and we have money enough to go on with for more than a week. Little Maggy brought me four shillings yesterday, and Mrs. Spenser owes us four more."

"My dear child, we must depend on ourselves now that Mr. Barnard is gone."

This had been the constant nervous reply of the poor invalid ever since Uncle Timothy's removal from London, although Jessie had already sent them sufficient money to pay their rent, which her uncle said must be due, and which he, good man, fancied was paid out of his purse, whereas it was taken from Jessie's savings.

"But tonight, mother—only tonight. You know it is my birthday, and I am eighteen. Give yourself a holiday for my sake, and I will read to you."

"Eighteen! eighteen!" echoed Mrs. Eveleigh, dropping the work from her fingers. "It is time now, whilst I have strength. My dear, I will not work tonight. You are eighteen! Do you love me, Tiny? Will you always love me? Will you never leave me whilst I live?"

"Love you, Mother!—leave you! What strange questions. Of course I love you, and shall never leave you."

As Tiny said this she rose, and putting her arms round Mrs. Eveleigh's neck, kissed her affectionately. The poor woman wept, and said—

"My child, have I acted by you as a mother, as you have always done by me as a daughter? God bless you for it!"

"You have been a tender mother to me always," said Tiny; "I wish I had a more loving nature, that I could have returned your tenderness better."

"Will you always call me mother as long as I am in this world, and sometimes think of me as your mother when I am in another?"

"How can I do otherwise?" said Tiny, suddenly feeling a return of certain suspicions that had occasionally haunted her through life.

"Because you are not my daughter, not my own, own child."

"Not your daughter!" exclaimed Tiny; "then who am I? what am I?"

These questions, now uttered for the first time, she had often longed to propose before.

"I will tell you, my child," said Mrs. Eveleigh; "but go first of all to that drawer, in the bureau of which I have always kept the key, and bring me all that it contains."

Tiny did as she was bid, and returned with her arms filled with articles of wearing apparel, and an old pocket-book in her hands. The latter she laid upon the table, the rest at Mrs. Eveleigh's feet, sides, or wherever there was a convenient place. Before she had completed her operations Mrs Eveleigh had a violent fit of coughing, and she was compelled to restrain her impatient anxiety

until she had administered jelly, and the irritation produced by the cough had subsided.

"There, at my feet," said Mrs. Eveleigh; 'your hand in mine, your head against my knees, that I may still fancy you my own dear child."

Tiny placed herself, with beating heart, upon the seat indicated, and listened to the sad history of her birth, and the painful circumstances connected with it.

When Mrs. Eveleigh told her all that she had herself been told of her mother's beauty of person and gentle manners, Tiny wept; and when she described her misery and death, she covered her face with both hands, leant her head upon her knees, and sobbed aloud. Mrs. Eveleigh did not believe the pale, calm girl to be capable of such emotion. When the clothes, sole relics of that unhappy mother, were given into her keeping, she dared not raise her eyes to look upon them, so fearful was the struggle that was going on within. Finally the old pocket-book was opened, and her mother's rings, purse, and the fragment of a letter, with its signature, 'Sophia,' drawn forth.

"Give me your left hand, poor child," said Mrs. Eveleigh with a hoarse voice: "this cameo was on the wedding-finger, and I will put it upon yours; God grant that it help to find your friends.

This wedding-ring was round her neck, which makes me hope she was married to your father; let me fasten it around your neck, that so you may always have hope of the same, as I have."

Feebly the weak, sad sufferer uplifted the long hair of the unfortunate girl, to hang around her neck the ring, which hope transformed into a sign of union. Convulsively was it grasped by her, and pressed to her lips. Then came the fair Italian characters of the writing on the piece of paper, which was supposed to have been written and torn again by her mother, and which proved that mother to have been a person of education. All this Tiny endured with bursting heart, but without uttering a word.

When it was over, Mrs. Eveleigh sank back in her chair exhausted. There was a long silence, unbroken except by Tiny's continued low sobbings. At last, with the fretful selfishness of illness, Mrs. Eveleigh said—

"Ah, I feared it would be so! You do not love me, you never loved me. But I am very faint; it has been too much for me, Tiny."

Tiny rose quickly. "Mother, my dear Mother, forgive me. It was so strange, so wonderful! Two mothers, yet no mother! No one, no one belonging to me! It is so horrible, so horrible!"

Tiny fell into Mrs. Eveleigh's arms, and buried her head in her bosom. She was immediately pressed to a fond but feeble heart.

"God bless you, my love! You called me mother. God bless you!"

Mrs. Eveleigh fainted.

Tiny was compelled to rouse herself, and to forget the real, lost mother, in the anxiety she felt for the supposed one she was about to lose.

The exertion and excitement of the late conversation had quite overcome Mrs. Eveleigh's small remaining strength, and it was some time before she came to herself. When she did so, it was only to feel obliged to lie down on a bed, from which she was to rise no more. Tiny had enough matter for thought and labour in her state; and her own sad history was only recalled in those hours of watching when the poor sufferer slept, or seemed to sleep.

The following day Pynsent and Charles came. Pynsent showed his brother into the little parlour, whilst he tapped at the door of the common sitting-room, where Tiny was, surrounded by five little pupils. It was just twelve o'clock, and she despatched them at once. Pynsent went into the room, and heard Tiny's unsatisfactory account of the invalid. He was much struck with the in-

creased paleness of her own face, and the painful expression of her features.

"You are not well?" he said anxiously.

"Quite well, but I have been obliged to sit up the greater part of the night, as our little servant had gone home when my mother's attack came on."

A slight flush overspread the face as the word "Mother" was spoken. Pynsent felt again that he could have found it in his heart to ask her to be his wife. Perhaps there was more than usual interest in his kind, open eyes, for Tiny quickly said—

"Perhaps you will be so good as to go upstairs. I will run first and prepare my mother;" and therewith she left the room, returning speedily with the request that Pynsent would go to Mrs. Eveleigh.

"There is some one waiting for you in the parlour," said Pynsent, as he went upstairs.

It had been agreed between him and Charles that Tiny should not be told who it was that awaited her. She had not time to inquire, and was frightened at the prospect of a stranger. At last she summoned courage to enter the little parlour. She saw a tall, thin, gentlemanlike-looking man standing with his back to the door, earnestly examining a painting which stood half-finished on

the easel, by the window. It was the head of an old man, who was in the habit of coming frequently to ask alms of Tiny, and who, in return for such trifles as she could bestow, had patiently sat to her for his picture. The shape of the head and features were singularly fine, bold, and prominent: the grey hair was wild and picturesque: the dress a motley of various kinds and colours. But the remarkable portion of the face was the eyes, in which a bright intellect mingled with a strange and painful insanity. The original of the picture had been in his youth a player and a poet. Unbefriended and unknown, he had made no progress in life. Harmless, but incurable, sensible on some points, but mad on others, he had been dismissed in middle age from an asylum, and had spent the rest of his life in wandering from place to place, a beggar for his daily bread. Not altogether unhappy, inasmuch as he frequently met with friends and benefactors, who, like Tiny, took an interest, first in the singular appearance of the old man, and finally in himself. The portrait was wonderfully clever for a girl of eighteen; bold and expressive. The dark countenance and darker background were relieved by the white hair, and the bright fragment of a red scarf that was twisted about the neck and shoulders.

Charles turned round as Tiny entered.

"It is capital, admirable! I could not have believed it!" he exclaimed enthusiastically, as he seized Tiny's hand, and pressed it devoutly to his lips, in acknowledgment of a talent that excited his profound admiration.

Tiny was so astonished, that she scarcely dared to look at this most extraordinary visitor.

"Tiny, you are a genius!" again exclaimed Charles: "forgive me if I have frightened you."

Tiny looked up, and recognized her old friend. Extreme shyness and great happiness combined, prevented her speaking, but her hand remained in that of Charles. She preserved her composure for a few seconds, and then burst into tears. The sudden meeting was too much for her, after all she had undergone during the previous day and night.

Charles now looked at her for the first time. The child he had thought so much of, whose wonderful countenance had haunted him all his life, and had been produced and reproduced in so many of his best paintings, stood before him, a pale and most lovely girl. In spite of the plain, dark dress that she wore, the black stuff apron, the unembroidered collar, it was impossible to see any one more lovely in that peculiar kind of spiritual beauty that he the most admired.

"Forgive my abruptness, dear Tiny," he said again, "but that painting is so clever, that I could not help expressing my surprise. But I ought to have remembered that you were in trouble. How is your mother?"

"Worse, I fear," said Tiny, commanding her feelings; "she was very ill last night." And then the thought that she stood before her best-beloved friend, Charles Burton—already worse than an orphan—rushed into her mind, and she was so entirely overcome, that she turned to leave the room, saying, "I will return directly; will you excuse me?"

"No!" said Charles, following her, and gently but firmly detaining her; "you require consolation and friendship more than solitude: we have been great friends for many years, and have, I hope, much in common between us. We love the same art, and, if I may judge from this, the same poet; we have the same dear friends, and are at home in the same scenes; therefore we have much to talk of."

As he spoke, he took up a volume of Shakspeare, which lay half-open on the easel, where it had lain for many days, like the picture, untouched.

"You thought that old man's head would make a fine King Lear, and you were right," he said, wishing to turn the current of her thoughts, which

he succeeded in doing: the Shakspeare was open at the tragedy of King Lear.

Tiny's eyes brightened, and a rare gleam of pleasure shot from them. Her ideal was understood and appreciated by him for whose sole approval she cared. She had laboured on, half in darkness, half in light; partly from a devoted love of the art, partly in the fond hope that Charles Burton might see and admire her work. She was repaid for the last six years of sorrow, toil, and that utter solitude of mind worse than all besides. She was understood,—she was not quite unworthy of her friend.

"We will study these together, Tiny," said Charles, pointing first to the picture, then to the tragedy; "it will be hard if we do not make something of them between us. I might give you some hints on the actual laborious part of painting, and you might help me in the ideal."

"I!" exclaimed Tiny with an incredulous smile.

Here Pynsent entered.

"I must speak a moment with you, Miss Eveleigh," he said.

He generally called her Miss Eveleigh, unless some sudden feeling prompted the more friendly term.

"Pynsent!" said Charles, "how long has the

Tiny you used to play with been elevated into a Miss? am I to become polite also, because she is no longer a 'wee bairnie'?"

"Oh no, if you please, do not!" said Tiny with an appealing voice.

"Never fear, Tiny, I am too old-fashioned."

Tiny followed Pynsent out of the room into the little school-room.

"I shall send a respectable nurse to help you," he said; "you must not have all this fag alone. The child you have as servant is not old enough to be of use. I will try to see your mother again this evening, but the nurse shall be sent at once."

Tiny felt what Pynsent had not the courage to say, that Mrs. Eveleigh's death was shortly to be expected.

"Tell me the worst," said Tiny calmly, "I can bear it."

"I fear she cannot be with you many weeks," said Pynsent.

"Weeks! thank God! I dreaded days or even hours." It was like a reprieve to a condemned criminal: she was not to lose her only sure stay quite so soon; she was not to be alone in the world perhaps for weeks instead of days.

Mrs. Eveleigh's bell rang.

"Wish your brother good-bye for me, if you

please; and thank you very, very much," said Tiny, as she gave her hand to Pynsent, and ran upstairs.

In the course of the day, a kind, respectable nurse arrived, who not only divided the watching with Tiny, but was a great comfort to her. Pynsent came, according to promise, in the evening, and continued his visits daily afterwards, and sometimes twice a day, when he could spare time. Charles also frequently accompanied him, and saw Tiny during his brother's brief visits to the invalid.

It was astonishing how Mrs. Eveleigh lingered; as if the lamp of life were replenished, drop by drop, by some invisible hand, it would not go out: perhaps the quiet, patient, waiting spirit tarried to the very last for Tiny's sake. Having disburdened itself of its one secret, it was calm as the soul of a sleeping infant; all that Tiny did or said was received with glances of the ineffable affection of a mother; and no daughter could more tenderly perform every duty, than Tiny performed hers.

"I leave you to the Saviour in whom I trust, and to whom I go," were amongst the last words that the dying woman said to her adopted child.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"My early friends, friends of my evil day;
Friends in my mirth, friends in my misery too;
Friends given by God, in mercy and in love;
My counsellors, my comforters, my guides;
My joy in grief, my second grief in joy;
Companions of my young desires; in doubt
My oracles, my wings in high pursuit."—POLLOK.

ALL was over! Tiny, Pynsent, Charles, and the nurse had followed poor Mrs. Eveleigh to her last resting-place, and had heard the solemn words "dust to dust," and the heavy earth echo over her coffin. All was over! Not only the patient, loving woman departed to another country, and "all was over" for her in this world; but, to all appearance, with her had vanished Tiny's every hope of happiness, and all seemed over for her as well. She was alone in the little parlour,—how truly alone!—the brothers had returned home, thinking it best not to intrude upon her grief at such a time, and the nurse had been dismissed, not without a promise however on her part to return. Of all Tiny's sad life, this moment was the saddest.

She had never known, until then, what her gentle companion had been to her; how loving and tender, how considerate, how motherly! In the last term lay the secret of all her inconsistencies: to have been and to have felt maternally, and yet not to have been a mother! Poor Tiny! two vague shadows haunted her; those of her supposed and real mother,—the former a meek, patient shadow, working in that armchair, or dying on the bed upstairs, looking ever to her for support and comfort, and, she humbly hoped, finding what she sought; the other a misty, but beautiful form, clothed in that large Indian shawl, and with an antique ring on her finger, and the wedding-ring close to her heart,—what was she? who was she?

Again Tiny brought forth the clothes she had worn, and spread them out before her. They were all of good material and ladylike in form and colour. When she had examined and re-examined every article, she sat down by the table on which they were spread, and wept. As she leant her elbow on the table, she pushed down an open letter which was on it; she took the letter in her hands, and read it again and again: kind, tender, affectionate, religious words covered the paper: they were written by Jessie; just such words as we might have expected her to write on such an occasion. The let-

ter concluded with a hearty and earnest invitation to Fairfield; an entreaty that the solitary girl should come "home"—so it was expressed—as soon as the melancholy ceremony of the interment was over.

"Home! home!" echoed Tiny involuntarily, "there is no home for me but this lonely house, and this I must give up to another in September; till then it must be paid for, and till then I have a shelter, and can earn a subsistence. No! no! sweet, pure Jessie; I cannot go to Fairfield with this secret on my conscience; I could not make my home with those who do not think me what I am. I was, at least, respectable as the child of the poor artist and his wife; I am now—God alone knows what I am, who I am. Was there ever any human being so desolate? Not a relative in the world; no claim on anything but charity. I will write and refuse at once."

The writing materials were brought, and the letter was written, blotted with the writer's tears. Distinctly and decidedly did she refuse to go to Fairfield, and become another burden on one already so much burdened as was Jessie. She said she could support herself for six months where she was, after which period she might find a situation in a private family; or else, if not sufficiently accomplished for that, obtain employment

as a needlewoman in some respectable establishment. She did not say that during the next six months she would paint day and night, in the hope of eventually living by her art,—although this plan was at the bottom of all the others. Gratefully she worded her letter, but as decidedly as if she were a woman of forty, instead of a young girl making her first voluntary decision. There was much of passionate energy working in that small weak frame, and circumstances were calling it forth.

She folded her letter, and took it herself to the post. Her little servant was in the kitchen, and she left her in charge of the house. When she returned, she found Pynsent awaiting her: he had simply driven Charles home, visited some patients, and come back to comfort and advise the desolate girl. She had not expected visitors, therefore had left the room strewed with her poor mother's clothes. Pynsent did not seem to be aware of this, as he was sitting, lost in thought, by the fire. He started when she entered, and, as if completing what he had been saying to himself, exclaimed—

"Yes, Tiny, you must go at once to Fairfield."

He looked at her, and never before had been so forcibly struck by her extreme paleness and peculiar beauty as now, when they were contrasted with the plain mourning dress she wore.

"I have just written to your sister to say that I cannot go," she said, as she seated herself opposite Pynsent.

"Cannot go! why, you cannot remain here, in London, without a protector," said Pynsent. "My uncle is your guardian, and Jessie your true friend, therefore to them you must go at once."

"I have refused, thank you," said Tiny, tears filling her eyes. "I shall begin my little school again tomorrow, and finish the work we have still in the house. I fear the rent must be paid till September, so I will give notice on quarter-day, which will soon be here. You see I have a house and home for many months, and I think I can live, and earn money enough to pay the rent in that time."

"You cannot live here alone; impossible! How can a young girl like you live unprotected in such a neighbourhood as this?"

"I have some idea that the nurse you sent, Mrs. Good, will take one of the rooms, and she will be a protection for me. Besides, I should see *no* one but my little pupils and their parents."

This was said with hesitation, because Tiny meant Pynsent to understand that she knew his visits must be discontinued; and he did understand it. Once more he felt ready to ask her to

be his wife, but again habitual prudence prevailed. There is little doubt that he loved her, and looked forward to the possibility of marrying her at some indefinite period. Now his object was to get her safe at Fairfield.

"And why are you resolved not to go to Fairfield?" he asked. "I shall write to Jessie, to both my uncles, and to Captain Burford, and get them all to back me."

"It would not do," replied Tiny with a sad smile; "I have been a burden too long, and must now begin to support myself. Were I to go first to happy Fairfield, it would be worse for me afterwards."

Pynsent acknowledged the truth of what she said.

"I dare not stay longer now," he said, "but I must try you again tomorrow on the same subject. I have an appointment at six, and it is now five."

"One moment!" said Tiny, with tears streaming down her cheeks.

She went to a bookshelf, and took down a well-bound book, together with a small, rather choice chimney ornament that had been placed upon it.

"My poor mother desired me to ask you to keep these in remembrance of her. It is a sad return—"

Tiny could say no more: the thought of her departed friend overcame her.

Pynsent hastily took the offerings, pressed Tiny's hands, and hurried to his carriage to hide his own feelings.

"May God bless you!" were Tiny's murmured words, as she heard him drive him away.

He went at once to Charles, and begged him to get into the first omnibus, go to Peckham, and see whether he could make anything of Tiny.

"Use all your influence to get her home," he said. "At any risk she must not be left alone; with her youth and beauty it would be destruction, and we cannot claim to be her lawful protectors."

It was between seven and eight when Charles reached Tiny. He found her at work, still surrounded by her unknown mother's clothes, which she had folded up and placed near her. She knew that to carry out her plan she must labour, and the sometime neglected workbox and fine linen wristbands had been brought forth. True, she could not do much for tears; still she was forcing her swimming eyes and trembling fingers to mark and draw forth the minute threads of the cloth, to make the straight line for the fine stitching which she must next accomplish.

Something more than a start of surprise greeted

Charles when he entered the room. The hands trembled more even than they had done over the work, and the eyes shot a wonderful gleam of pleasure through their tears.

"Working, Tiny, already! this must not be!" said Charles, taking the wristband and needle from her hands, and seating himself beside her,—so different from Pynsent, who always placed himself at a distance. "You must give up this wearing occupation, and go to Fairfield."

"I cannot go to Fairfield," she said, dropping her hands languidly on her knees, and hanging her head to hide the tears.

"Why have you such a dislike to Fairfield?" asked Charles heedlessly.

"Dislike! Oh, unkind word!" said Tiny.

"I did not mean it, dear Tiny, but I partly understand you: you will not go home, and you must not, shall not, remain here. Tiny, there is one alternative. If I could at such a time,—if I dared to hope that you would consent,—I would ask you to share and aid the fortunes of one who has nothing, like yourself, but his good right arm to make his way with. We have everything in common; we love the same glorious art,—we have the same ambition, hopes, thoughts, purposes,—shall we have, have we, the same love?"

Poor Tiny! Lower and lower drooped the head, faster and faster flowed the tears.

"Only one word, one look, to say that the childish affection you showed me years ago, and all the tender care and kindness it drew with it, is not quite vanished with childhood?" said Charles, gently stroking the hair of the drooping head.

Tiny looked up, made her usual effort at self-command, and spoke hurriedly but audibly. "What my feelings were years ago they have been and still are. I do not care for any one in this world as I care for you. I could work for you, live for you, die for you, but you must not speak to me again as you have just spoken."

"It is only brotherly love then, as I feared, dear Tiny."

"No, no! ah, no! I wish it were. To know that—that you feel what you say you feel, is too great happiness."

Tiny hid her face in her hands, but Charles drew the hands away, and looked earnestly into the face.

"Dear Tiny, we love one another," he said; "we are one in heart and soul: let us thank God for it. This being the case, no human power shall divide us; we will share the good and evil of this life, whatever betide; I will work, and you shall

help me, and so, as husband and wife, we will be happy, and bring to perfection the talents given us, which first brought our souls so close together."

"It cannot be, it cannot be," murmured Tiny.

"I must know why it cannot be," said Charles.

Tiny withdrew her hands from Charles, and again covered her face with them, as she said distinctly, but with considerable effort—

"Because I am not what you think me; that is poor and desolate enough,—but I am poorer and more desolate still. Mrs. Eveleigh was not my mother; your uncle took me to save me from the workhouse, and brought me up for charity: I am an outcast from my kindred, if I have any, a nameless, deserted orphan."

"Then Tiny," said Charles solemnly, again tenderly pressing the drooping head with his hand, as if in assurance of love and protection, but refraining from withdrawing the shame-concealing hands from the burning face; "then, dearest Tiny, then, with God's blessing, we will give you kindred, and an honest, honourable name, which we will strive together to make more honourable still; parents I cannot give you; for, like you in that as in all else, I am an orphan; but brothers and sisters shall be yours, and, better still, 'a friend that sticketh closer than a brother,' who will work for

and with you and strive to make you forget that you ever felt, even for a moment, alone in the world."

"Charles!" said Tiny, letting fall her hands, and looking suddenly into his face with an expression of such astonishment, love, and gratitude as it is well to see beam from a human countenance, because it approaches it to the Divine.

She could speak no other word, and none was needed. Charles allowed the sobs and tears that followed to have way, before he broke the silence, and then he gently led her to talk of him rather than of herself, leaving it to time to unfold to him the little she knew of herself. But before he left her, he had heard it all; by fragments, it is true, but she could not be happy until he knew what she had been told. He made no comments, further than to assure her, by looks more than words, that her revelations made no change in him; his resolution had been taken, and his plans formed, when Mrs. Eveleigh died, and he was not a character to alter them. The beautiful, the gifted, and the good were all in all to him, as to many other enthusiastic and youthful hearts; and prudent thoughts of the future, and its possible weight of cares and trials, were rarely in his mind. Tiny was of the same nature, but had had more foresight and forethought instilled into her by circumstances,

and was therefore less certain of the propriety of his arguments than he was himself, although quite carried away by them whilst he was near her. They had faith in themselves, in each other, and in the art they loved; and life seemed to each of them only given to work out grand designs, and to conduce to the good and happiness of mankind. Tiny suddenly saw a new world, and a glorious one, opened before her, too large and splendid to admit of counting costs, as in her working-day, circumscribed one; let us not wonder then if, for a time, she forgot all else but faith in the enthusiast before her, and hope in the future.

"My picture is received into the Academy," said Charles; "tomorrow is the opening day; I feel that the labour and study I have bestowed on it must make it a picture of note, if there is justice in the world; and I also know that I can do still better. I have put a price of two hundred and fifty guineas upon it, for I am sure it is worth it, even though it be the first I have exhibited in my own country. Abroad I might have had two hundred, and may still have that sum, if I fail of success in the Royal Academy, but I wished to employ my talent for my own country. Tomorrow, Tiny, I will fetch you, and take you to the Academy; I am unknown, and we can watch together the fate of

the picture, and our own; for, if it sell before a week is over our heads, you shall be mine, and we will paint the next together."

It was in vain for Tiny to shake her head, and hint at the possibility of disappointment, and the impossibility of such haste. Charles was positive; and when they parted, pledged to one another for life or death, his last words were, "You shall not be lonely long."

It was with considerable anxiety that Pynsent awaited the return of Charles. He sat by the fire with a deep medical treatise before him, trying to fix his attention upon it, but in vain. He had just put by his pencil and papers, having quite failed in his endeavours to make clear notes of a case he had been attending. He perpetually saw the words, "What can Charles be about?" both on the blank and printed paper, and tormented himself by thinking how improper it was that he and Tiny should be so long alone together. Everything must have an end, and so had his half jealous, half prudential torments; for the last omnibus brought Charles.

"What is the matter? what has kept you?" exclaimed Pynsent with unusual animation.

"Sit down, my dear fellow, and I will tell you all," replied Charles, drawing an armchair to the fire.

The "all," when told, was a thunderbolt. Whilst relating his engagement and intended marriage, Tiny's history, and, in short, all that he had said and done during the evening, Charles was too much engrossed in his own happiness to look at his brother. Pynsent, meanwhile, experienced many conflicting feelings. Charles had effected in an hour what his prudence had forbidden him to do through long, long years. Would he be the better or the worse for it? Such sentences as the following were frequently ejaculated, mentally, as the history proceeded.

"Thank God, I never proposed for her! What a fool I was, and am! Saved from being made a greater, perhaps, by Charles's precipitancy. Now I can partly understand what Jessie has had to go through. Both supplanted by our youngers. Paint together! starve together, most likely. Ay, what is to become of her unless she marries? and what is to become of both if they marry? Two hundred and fifty guineas will support them for a year and a half, and they will have another picture by next year worth five hundred. I wish they may get it! He has laid all his plans as if he had a thousand a year,—he, dependent on his uncles till very lately. He says nothing about the thousand pounds from the estate. We are not a selfish race,

thank God! Poor boy! how excited he looks! I suppose they have always loved one another. Hang this love! it makes men idiots, and women babies. I'll have no more of it, at all events. There shall be one *outwardly* sensible member of the Burtons, however confoundedly foolish he may be inwardly! I have never betrayed myself, thanks to my good fortune. And these rash youngsters are all to be happy, whilst Jessie and I are to labour for them. Well! we only play the part of parents, and do our duty. Sweet Tiny! she is too lovely a creature to be cast upon the world; you are right there, Sir. Ah! not Mrs. Eveleigh's daughter? I suspected that. Well, I could never have married any one, if I had been a greater fool than I am, whose parents I did not know to be respectable; so Providence has ordered well for me. But what advice am I to give in this case?"

The last thought was suggested by Charles's winding up with the words—

"And now, old fellow, what do you say to it all?"

"Say that you are a lucky dog if you get Tiny and all that you expect besides," was the calm reply.

"I forgot to say, that I feel convinced that

Tiny must be the child of talented, if not of distinguished parents," said Charles; "and I have no doubt of a marriage concealed from peculiar motives."

"Humph!" ejaculated Pynsent.

"Pynsent, I should like to shake you!" said Charles.

"You would scarcely shake sympathy out of me, I am so sleepy; I am not sure that I haven't been asleep this half-hour. Now let us both go to bed, and dream upon it. We shall be able to discuss the matter better tomorrow morning, after we have had the aid of visitations in dreams. If you are hungry, ring for something to eat; but I suppose lovers don't feel those vulgar cravings. Good night, old chap! There's a salutation for an artist and innamorato!"

Pynsent went to bed, but not to sleep. He wrote at once to Jessie, for the advice he did not feel able to give himself. Then he reproached himself for want of brotherly feeling. "I was jealous, and could not wish him joy. I vow, love, like money, is the root of all evil." And, in order to make up for his omissions, he stalked up to Charles's attic in his dressing-gown, and apostrophized him with—

"I say, Charles, you must let me wish you joy,

whether you get it or no. Remember, I am no lover myself, so don't understand the rhapsodies."

"Thank you, Pynsent; I knew you did not feel as cold as you seemed about this great event of my life, but you threw a sad damp upon it."

"Well, let it dry now, Charlie, and be sure that you have a brother who will do his best to make you happy. Shake hands once more. God bless you—you—and—and—Tiny!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Monmouth's Foot, though deserted, made a gallant stand. The Life Guards attacked them on the right, the Blues on the left: the Somersetshire clowns, with their scythes and the butt ends of their muskets, faced the Royal Horse like old soldiers. . . . The Dissenting preachers who had taken arms against Popery, and some of whom had probably fought in the great Civil War, prayed and preached in red coats and huge jack-boots, with swords by their sides. . . . Sedgemoor fight was the last, deserving the name of battle, that has been fought on English ground."—MACAULAY.

THE following morning Charles went for Tiny, according to his promise, and took her to the Royal Academy. It was early, and there were as yet few visitors. It was his pleasure that his companion should not be told which was his picture, as he wished to discover whether it would strike her fancy or not. Tiny felt this to be a most trying plan; but he willed it so, and all her influence was insufficient to induce him to change. They accordingly walked leisurely from picture to picture with beating hearts: he fearing lest his should not attract her notice, and she dreading to pass it by unremarked, or to make some disparaging ob-

servation upon it. He endeavoured to gain her opinion of the various paintings, by commenting freely upon them himself; but he could only discover those she did not admire, from her silence. Her taste was perfect: and as they passed on, Charles trembled more and more. It was not necessary to point out to her the seemingly living and breathing animals of Landseer, as they stood before her free and perfect, as if Nature herself had painted them,—neither the grand historical portraiture of Maclise,—nor the calm, subdued colouring of Herbert,—nor the faithful, Cuyp-like, sunny animals of Cooper, united with the fresh and beautiful landscapes of his coadjutor, Lee,—nor the Wilkie-like, natural Websters,—nor the inimitable Stanfields,—nor those of a hundred others, whose names and paintings live in every heart that has a throb to bestow on the divine art they have followed and lived for. Tiny knew each of these by intuition, and it was a treat to Charles to see her deep, sad eyes lighten with pleasure, and to hear her quiet expressions of admiration as she stood before them. So great was her love for her art, that she forgot Charles's picture for the moment, when commenting with the artist's taste and knowledge upon the salient points in those of his fellow-labourers. It was when she

came to some striking piece, the peculiar style or colouring of which she did not know, executed by some artist as yet only ascending the ladder of fame, that she paused anxiously, and tried to read in the eyes of her friend whether it were *the* picture or not. They came to the inner room at last. "I must have passed it by unnoticed," she said to herself, as her heart seemed to fail her. But Charles's eyes were still bright.

"This is it! I am sure this is it!" she exclaimed, as she suddenly stopped before a pleasant, green, fresh landscape, with cattle and figures. Charles could almost have echoed her words, for it was such a scene as he had often sketched himself near his uncle's house in Somersetshire.

"No," he said, "that is not it; but I could almost fancy I grouped those cows."

More and more minutely does she now examine every picture, and more anxiously does she glance into Charles's face.

"That is a beautiful group," she says, as she stops before a picture of a cottage with children at play in the foreground, and half fancies it is what Charles would paint: but there is no assenting smile in his face. "Ah! that is true nature itself!" she says. "Is it a Cooper? No, it is new to me." Again she guesses, but apparently wrong,

as they pause before a clever sketch of cattle. She somehow fancies that Charles's picture must be a Somersetshire sketch, and half expects to see Fairfield itself, or the river and meadows he loved so well.

"Suppose it should be this?" her heart suggests as they face a large frame, before which a considerable group is assembled.

They are obliged to pause awhile before they can obtain a sight of the picture, and Tiny seats herself for a few moments on one of the benches opposite, and listens to the comments of the spectators.

"That is a very fine picture," exclaims one elderly gentleman with the air of a connoisseur; "I scarcely know the hand, but it is very clever."

"Ah," says a young man by his side, "I don't know; a pretty child, certainly,"—here he turns over the leaves of his catalogue,—"but not otherwise remarkable, it has not even the artist's name. It is signed 'Alpha:' some beginner, probably."

"What is this?" whispers a lady to a friend who holds a catalogue. "It must be something remarkable, there are so many people round it."

"It is called 'Sedgemoor after the Fight,' and the motto is 'All for glory,'" is the reply. "I always admire those dark pictures with the moon just rising in the distance."

"Nothing could be finer than that prostrate dying peasant; or the Puritan who is reading to him, and is himself wounded," says a gentleman who has been attentively considering the picture for some time without speaking.

"Except the child," rejoins a friend; "she must be a portrait. Was there ever anything truer, and yet more spiritual, than the face and attitude?"

"Rather affected, I think," drawls a dandy, looking through his eye-glass. "Who ever saw a child kneeling by the side of a peasant, and that peasant with a scythe near him, killed in battle?"

"But it is 'After the Fight,' and the child and dog have come to seek for the dead. The plain is covered with slain. There are soldiers, peasants, Puritans, and horses everywhere. It is Sedgemoorfield; and very clever too."

"Upon my soul, that is a promising picture," exclaims a voice that makes Tiny start. She looks at the speaker.

"Mr. Michelson," whispers Charles; "do not let him recognize us."

"That child!" continues Mr. Michelson—for he it is, "I have seen the original; who can it be, and where have I seen the face?"

"Do you not think the moonlight too strong

upon the child, and the men too much in shadow?" suggested one of three gentlemen who accompanied Mr. Michelson, and who all appeared either artists or connoisseurs.

"That is a fine idea," remarked another of the two. "The dog is protecting both father and child —one paw on her, the other on him, whilst his eye is on the raven hovering near."

"There is a little imitation of Landseer in the dog," says another.

"Dog!" interrupts Mr. Michelson, "look at the child: I never saw anything so beautiful in my life as her face. And then the portrait! I must know who the artist is!"

Mr. Michelson moved away towards another quartette of critics who were standing near.

"That painter's fortune is made!" muttered one of the gentlemen he left; "Michelson doesn't praise for nothing."

"Now we can get a sight of the picture," whispered Tiny, half withdrawing the thick black veil that covered her face.

Charles walked towards the painting, and as Tiny leant on him, she thought she felt his arm tremble.

The subject of the picture was, as the bystanders have already said, a battle-field by moonlight. The

prominent characters were a dying peasant with a Puritan divine reading the Bible to him, and a child kneeling by his side, clasping his hand in hers, and raising her eyes to Heaven. A large sheep-dog seemed to be watching both the living and the dead, and keeping at bay some ravens hovering above. The peasant had fallen fighting for the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth, and the distant field—or Sedgemoor—was covered with the slain. The picture was remarkable for its strong light and shade, and for an evident, and, at that time, original attempt to throw off some of the mere tricks or conventionalities of art. It was, apparently, the work of a young artist of considerable genius and over-much boldness; but the merits far exceeded the defects. The broad, uninteresting moor was rendered poetic by the faint gleams of moonlight that fell across it, and by the power of the artist in giving distance, and yet melting that distance into the dark evening sky. The expression of the child's face as she held her dead father's hand to her breast, and seemed to be entreating Heaven to restore him to life, was touchingly beautiful. The moonlight on the long hair, pale unearthly face, and clasped hands, brought out the figure as if it was actually kneeling before you, whilst the shadow of the dog threw the form of

the peasant and Puritan into gloom, and gave a night-effect to the whole foreground, relieved by the gleams of moonlight on the child.

You and I, Reader, have seen that child before, and so have Charles and Tiny, though the latter does not recognize her. She stands before her own portrait, gazing on it as if in a dream of wonder, doubt, and hopeful admiration. She has so often, in their childish days, heard Charles talk of the fatal Sedgemoor fight, and the interest the moor, which he had often visited, had for him, that she almost fancies the painting is at last reached. How frequently and energetically had he endeavoured to describe to her the dreadful massacre of the Somersetshire peasantry, as they fought with their scythes, or other labouring utensils, for their "King Monmouth," as they chose to call him, and fought to the death, whilst he, their leader, had fled for life. How often had he praised his Puritan heroes, preaching and fighting for the religion they perished to preserve, and declared that a poem or a picture should immortalize the moral and spiritual courage of men who, however blindly misled, had died for a supposed king, and the preservation of a true faith. And here were the painting and poem united. The sturdy peasant with his bloody scythe by his side, and the stern Puritan breathing his

last, apparently, in reading the Holy Book he had striven to keep open for the people, to one of the unlettered multitude, who passed away from earth in listening. Both true to the last; and here, in the kneeling child, was the poem. Filial affection had brought her over the bloody field, led by the instinct of the faithful shepherd's dog, to her peasant father's corpse,—one of the thousands of orphans made that day, by mistaken zeal and misplaced ambition. Sad but true poetry of life! This was a picture that Tiny would have wished him she loved to have painted. Was it his?

She looked into his face. His eyes were bent earnestly on her. They had been watching every varying expression of her countenance, and seemed, from the gleams of pleasure that lighted them, to be satisfied with what they had seen.

"Yours!" said Tiny under her breath.

"What of it?" asked Charles.

"Beautiful, very beautiful!" was the reply, whilst the black veil was hastily drawn down to conceal the tears that gathered in the eyes of the speaker.

"Mine! and you have been the invisible agent," said Charles, pressing the arm he held within his. "That was your portrait some ten years ago, sketched then, but worked into every imaginable form all these years: I am satisfied."

He drew her gently through the crowded rooms. They did not pause to examine any other pictures; even the crowning glory of the Exhibition was passed by unnoticed. They scarcely spoke again, until, by means of a succession of omnibuses, they arrived at the quiet cottage at Peckham.

The following day Charles had the satisfaction of learning that his picture had been purchased by Mr. Michelson for the price affixed, £250. He had moreover the pleasure of finding, during the ensuing week, the cards of several celebrated painters on his table, as well as those of some of the liberal patrons of the art. His fame had begun, and he had now to labour to complete it.

Various characteristic letters arrived from home, commenting on the hasty marriage he had declared it his positive intention of making. Uncle James's contained a full approval, and a hint that if, at any time, he wanted a hundred pounds to help to keep house, he might apply to him as banker. "Marry whilst you are young, my boy, and don't waste your valuable days in old-bachelorhood," it said, "I am only now beginning to live, at sixty-five, and had I been able to obtain the hand of your admirable Aunt in early life, I should have lived at least thirty-five years." Aunt Betsey, on the contrary, was highly wroth at the idea of a Burton's inter-

marrying with a poor artist's orphan, not remembering that her nephew was nothing but a poor artist himself. From Jessie there were two letters, one dictated by Uncle Timothy, and the other wholly her own. The former contained all that the dictator knew of Tiny's birth, and an entreaty that Charles would do nothing hastily; also a warm blessing on the pair, if they really decided upon roughing it together in the world. The latter, as was Jessie's custom, contained sound and prudent advice. In the first place she begged Charles to wait until he could see his way clear, and to endeavour to induce Tiny to go to Fairfield, and stay there for some months. Much more she wrote, which those who know her character will imagine, but which was quite thrown away upon Charles.

"Uncle James is a true, great-hearted man!" he exclaimed as he gave his letter to Pynsent, "but, thank God! I shall not want his help."

"Humph!" was Pynsent's first word as he read. "How can any old dotard be so blind! Your admirable Aunt! Well, Cupid is hoodwinked, doubtless. First-rate advice! To drag a young girl into poverty. Some people are children all their lives, and such were the last generation of Barnards. I hope the present may turn out wiser."

"True to yourself, Aunt Betsey!" said Charles,

throwing down the half-sheet of delicate satin note-paper that enshrined that lady's aristocratic sentiments. "How could that noble, unselfish Uncle James ever have fallen in love with you?"

"Most admirable Aunt!" exclaimed Pynsent, taking up the letter, "every one has his monomania, and you have always had yours. I esteem you for your consistency. The only inconsistent thing you ever did was marrying a plebeian; but there the fear of old-maidism overcame you."

"Uncle Timothy wishes it, I am sure!" ejaculated Charles as he read letter the third: "one can see it through all."

"Poor Uncle Timothy!" was the rejoinder on the opposite side of the question; "he wishes what he thinks every one else wishes. He never knew what worldly prudence was, and so at nearly seventy he is poor, and almost blind."

"But he is happy," said Charles, "nevertheless."

"Yes, thank God; happy in a clear conscience, the hope of a better world, and the love of all who know him."

"And who would desire a more glorious old-age?" asked Charles triumphantly.

"But Uncle Timothy never married," was the quiet reply.

"Jessie is certainly a perfect character," again

commented Charles, as he read the last letter; "but I sometimes think her prudence makes her cold and calculating. I suppose, after all, a woman may be too good to be agreeable."

"That from you, Charles?" said Pynsent reproachfully.

"Forgive me; but Jessie was never in love, and how can she judge of my feelings?"

"Perhaps Jessie has been more in love, and more warmly and sincerely constant, than you are ever likely to be; but she is unselfish, and you are—"

"Not selfish!—oh! do not say that. I simply wish to rescue Tiny at once from misery, and I know my own powers of gaining a livelihood."

"So be it, Charles. You know the trite old maxims about 'knowing oneself,' and Peter the Great's notions of self-government, etc., so I will not moralize; but as to Jessie, she has learnt them all by heart, and I am thankful for such a sister."

"And I for such a brother and sister," said Charles, extending his hand to Pynsent, and grasping his as soon as it was offered. "So you must come down to Peckham tomorrow, and give the unprotected and orphan girl a brother and sister likewise by giving her to me."

Why did Pynsent suddenly withdraw his hand

and put it before his eyes? No bystander, not even Charles, could have told; for in a few seconds he removed it, and, with a clear glance and frank tone, replied—

"Tomorrow is very soon, but I am ready if you are; and, if it is to be such a hasty affair, it may as well be done at once. I say, old fellow, you and Tiny must put up here until you can find a proper house of your own: there is room for us all; but I must be off to a patient. You will ruin my profession if you go on talking of love and matrimony."

The following morning, at about eleven o'clock, there was seen within one of the Peckham churches a simple bridal party. Charles and Tiny stood before the altar, both ready to make, and intending to keep faithfully, the solemn vows they made. Tiny looked even paler than usual, but serene and happy. She had no occasion for tears, for she had no friend to leave behind, and all to gain. The plain morning dress and bonnet that had for the day replaced the mourning, were white, and that was all that was bridal about it. Pynsent had provided her with a beautiful bouquet of lilies of the valley, as if he thought that nothing with colour could become one so pale and delicate. There were two little girls in white, her pupils

heretofore, who acted the parts of bridesmaids, and the good nurse who was with Mrs. Eveleigh when she died. As Pynsent gave Tiny's hand to Charles, and heard each utter words that bound them to one another for life, perchance he trembled slightly, and a little chill fell on his warm, manly heart; but it vanished when he kissed Tiny tenderly, and whispered that she was now his sister.

The poor, silly child, who had not wept before, shed tears at being thus admitted into near relationship with one so true and noble, and they fell into the white lilies that she raised to her face to hide them. Pynsent inwardly prayed that her tears might never have a sadder source or a bitterer end. When he shook his younger brother by the hand there was no selfish regret in his heart. He rejoiced at the look of happiness and pride that beamed upon him, and, following him and his young wife out of the church, blessed them, and wished them a long life of peace.

There was a quiet little repast waiting for them at the cottage when they reached it, presided over by the mother of one of Tiny's pupils, and the old couple next door came to partake of it. Moreover, Tiny's friend, the mad beggar, was at the door in his very best motley, and they all declared he should be admitted to the feast.

It was not a very cheerful wedding party; neither was it a sad one. Tiny was thinking of poor Mrs. Eveleigh, who had so lately sat a sufferer in that picture-garnished room, and wondering whether she were with them in the spirit; and Pynsent was looking forwards to the uncertain future, and fearing lest his brother's golden schemes should be disappointed, and the delicate bride reduced to worse trials than she might have had to bear alone. Charles was all hope and happiness. Two hundred and fifty pounds in hand, and talents enough to win at least double that sum by next year, what had he to fear? He and Tiny would go for a fortnight to the sea, and then return and set to work in earnest.

A neat cab was at the door to convey the young couple to London Bridge, whence they were to travel by South-Eastern Railway to Folkestone, and thence to some quiet cottage by the sea, where they might have love and nature all to themselves. Tiny's small portion of luggage was soon packed into the vehicle, but the various painting apparatus of bride and bridegroom were less easily stowed away. Even during the honeymoon their beloved art was not to be neglected. All was ready at last, and the little party were to separate. Once more Pynsent kissed his sister-in-law, and

shook hands with his brother. The little maidens, in their white frocks, with tearful eyes hung round the neck of their dear instructress, and the two matrons bade her "God speed." The mad beggar plucked some of the few dusty flowers in the little garden bed, and strewed them, somewhat theatrically, on the path to the carriage, dancing and lamenting in curious discord the while. Tiny pulled her thick black crape veil over her face and hurried on, followed by the rest. She had resumed her mourning garb for travelling, and the croaking malcontents of the world would have declared deep black and a motley-clad beggar bad omens of future happiness; but we shall see. At all events, the sun shone out bravely, and the one or two sparrows that haunted the house-top chirped merrily, as much as to say, you have nature at least in your favour. And so doubtless they had, for true love and nature generally go hand in hand, as we hope they will do, till "death them doth part."

Pynsent sat between the two little maidens, and soon succeeded in comforting them, and thereby comforting himself. He gave them half-a-crown apiece, and told them to buy a pretty picture-book with it, and to keep it for Tiny's sake.

"I always said Mrs. Evelcigh and her daughter

were quite respectable, Sir," said the mother of the children.

"I should like to hear any one say they were not, Ma'am," thundered Pynsent. "I would not advise such a one to come within pistol-shot of me."

Then he gave five shillings to the mad beggar, and as much to Tiny's little serving maid, whom he had often feed before, and presented the two ladies with a white shawl each in memory of the day, begging them to be careful of Tiny's house until her return. And then he walked all round the little parlour leisurely, which took him some time to accomplish, small as it was, for he must needs handle various little matters that belonged to Tiny, and think how she had looked when employed in this or that occupation. Finally, ejaculating to himself, "What an arrant fool thou art, oh, Pynsent Burton!" he bade farewell to the bridal party, and, once more getting into an unsentimental omnibus, ruminated over his own shortcomings until he was unceremoniously informed that he had sixpence to pay, and might as well be thinking of his outward as of his inward man, since he was about to return to busy bachelor life again.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"If it be I, as I suppose I be,
I have a little dog at home, and he knows me:
If it be I, he'll wag his little tail;
If it baint I, he'll bark and he'll rail."

NURSERY SONG.

WHEN Pynsent returned home, he was informed by his servant that various requests had been made for his attendance on various patients. Amongst others, there had been a servant from an hotel in Jermyn-street, desiring the immediate attendance of Mr. Barnard. Now when Mr. Barnard was sent for, it was usually by some old friend or patient who had not been informed of the change of dynasty in Duke-street; and Pynsent generally wrote, or sent a message, enlightening the said friend or patient thereupon, and giving him a chance of calling in a fresh surgeon if he liked to do so. In the present instance, the messenger had been very urgent, saying that a lady was extremely ill, and wished to see Mr. Barnard without a moment's delay. Pynsent thought it might be better

to go at once, and as the patient was a lady, and possibly a young one, he went upstairs, and deliberately put on his uncle's wig. Everybody has been guilty of some wilful deception during his life: this was Pynsent's. He had found the wig answer so well in one or two previous instances, that he invariably tried it upon new ladies. It certainly made him look ten years older.

Having arranged the wig to his satisfaction, he proceeded, seemingly a sober gentleman of fifty, to the lady at the hotel in Jermyn-street. The man who had been sent for him did not appear to know the name of the patient, and simply left the address; and Pynsent inquired at the door:—

"You have a lady who is ill here, I believe. I am the surgeon who has been sent for."

"Duke-street, Sir?" asked the waiter.

"Yes."

"Widow ladies, Sir?"

"I do not know."

"This way, Sir. Your name, Sir?"

"Burton." The man was out of hearing.

"Mr. B——, the doctor, Ma'am," he said, opening a door on the first floor, and ushering Pynsent into a very handsome room.

"Oh, Mr. Barnard, I am so glad you are come! Do you remember me?"

A lady in a widow's cap walked across the room to meet the supposed Mr. Barnard, holding out both hands. She suddenly stopped as she came nearer, and said—

"I beg your pardon; this is a mistake."

"I—ah!—Mr. Barnard has given up practice, Madam, and I have succeeded him," stammered Pynsent confused.

"I am sorry," said the lady, evidently disappointed; "where is he?"

"He is in Somersetshire with his relations."

"At——?" began the lady.

"My dear," interrupted a weak voice from a sofa, "will you see if anything can be done for me?"

The lady returned to the other end of the room, motioning to Pynsent to follow her.

"My mother is greatly out of health, and wished to consult Mr. Barnard. This is Mr. Barnard's successor, Mamma; will you speak to him?"

"I should rather have seen Mr. Barnard, my dear," was the reply, in a peevish tone of voice; "but I dare say this gentleman will do something for me."

"Another widow!" muttered Pynsent to himself, and he thought of Sam Weller's father, and his advice about "vidders," saying, or rather

thinking, that two must be "equal to forty single women."

The younger lady placed a chair near the sofa of the invalid for Pynsent, and withdrew. So great had been Pynsent's confusion at being so suddenly addressed as his uncle, that he had not even looked at her: besides, he never had been given to contemplating ladies' faces; and now he had lost Tiny, he never meant to think of or look at a woman again. He managed, nevertheless, to discover that the lady left behind was of middle age, and of soft appearance and manners; the remains, in short, of a fair beauty without any great expression of countenance, and, consequently, no longer very attractive in appearance. He also soon found out that she was nervous, dyspeptic, and wholly wrapped up in herself and her ailments, without any real disease, but imagining that she had every bad symptom that everybody had ever had, since the time of Adam to the present day.

"Bread pills and water, coloured and flavoured in every possible manner," thought Pynsent, whilst he felt his patient's pulse, looked at her tongue, listened to her details of imaginary ills, and questioned her as gravely as if he had really believed that she had all the diseases she fancied.

We said that Pynsent's one deception was his

wig. I fear we must add another that he enjoyed and encouraged along with many others of his medical brethren, *videlicet*, that of wearing a grave face when his patients were resolved to be in a dying state, whether he himself believed them to be so or not. He began life by resolutely trying to make a nervous invalid he attended, and a rich one, believe that there was nothing the matter with him but nervousness,—and that is bad enough: he lost his patient and his fees, both having gone to a doctor who was willing to let him have his own way.

"It is a melancholy weakness," thought Pynsent, as the lady in the Jermyn-street hotel bewailed her condition, "but we must humour it."

"You think I may live some few months?" asked she.

"Decidedly, Madam; there is no immediate danger in your case, and I hope, with time and care, we may succeed in relieving you."

Be it observed, aside, that Pynsent had got into the royal pronoun "we," in vogue amongst his fraternity.

"India was my destruction," said the patient.

Pynsent opened his ears; but the remembrance of India apparently was too much for the invalid, who began to cry.

The other widow's cap popped into the room. Pynsent suspected that it had been listening through the door communicating with the next apartment. It said—

"May I come in? I am afraid you have been talking too much, Mamma:" and it was placed exactly opposite Pynsent.

"Might I trouble you for a pen and ink?" began Pynsent, "or, no: I will just call at the chemist's, and order the prescriptions to be sent."

He looked at the younger lady suddenly, and found a most wicked pair of blue eyes fixed, with a mischievous expression, on his wig. He always fancied everybody looked at the wig when he had it on, just as he knew a third person must think him a humbug when he humoured a nervous patient. He had no doubt the very pretty young widow had found him out both ways. He was confused, and rose to depart.

"When shall I see you again?" asked the Mamma.

"I will call in the course of the week."

"Oh! tomorrow, at the latest; I may be dead in the course of a week."

"Very well, Madam, tomorrow," said Pynsent, bowing.

He was impelled to look again at the pretty

widow. There was a ludicrous smile about the mouth, but the eyes still sought his wig.

Pynsent absolutely blushed, as he bowed once more, muttered "Good morning," and took his departure, without leaving his card, or inquiring the name of his patient.

"There is certainly a likeness to somebody," said Pynsent, as he walked down Jermyn-street and into St. James's-street, and thence to Piccadilly, to his chemist's.

In spite of Tiny, so lately married, the face of that pretty widow haunted him. She was somewhere about thirty years old, he fancied,—she might have been either less or more; at all events she was quite young. He could not help wishing that he had looked again: he was determined to do so on the morrow.

The morrow came, and Pynsent went to the two widows, still with his uncle's wig barely covering his own hair. He found them, as before, together. He made his bow, and the younger lady her curtsey, soon after which ceremony she again withdrew.

The Mamma went through all her symptoms, varying them somewhat from the previous day, and saying that she thought the medicine had done her good.

"The fact is, I do not like to alarm my daughter by saying how dangerously ill I really am," she said, "but I feel it to be impossible for me to last long: she will not see it, poor thing, but really is quite in spirits sometimes, and that is too much for me. I had a remarkably good constitution once; but twenty or thirty years in an Indian climate would ruin the best in the world. I should not have been there so long, but my daughter married, and my husband got a lucrative appointment, and so we were all sacrificed. This fearful war has made us both widows."

Here the younger lady appeared.

"I tell Mamma she will get quite strong and well if she can go into the country," she began, seating herself opposite Pynsent and taking up some work.

"Ah, my dear," sighed her mother, "you little know what I suffer, or you would not be so hopeful."

"But I know of a most charming place, that would cure any one, if we could only get you there. You know Somersetshire?" addressing Pynsent.

Pynsent looked at her, and again met the mischievous eyes.

"Yes, very well," he replied.

"And Mr. Barnard is there! How I should like to see him again! I once met him in Somersetshire. Do you know anything of his family?"

"Would you just be kind enough to feel my pulse?" interrupted the mother; "I think I must have an increase of fever."

Pynsent did so, and said it was rather quick, but there was nothing alarming in it. Again he met those wicked blue eyes, and saw the mouth curled into a smile. He bent over the invalid, to hide his own amusement, and whilst he did so, the owner of the wicked blue eyes presented a dose of soothing medicine to her mamma: in so doing she managed, either inadvertently or by malice prepense, to stretch across Pynsent's head, and fairly to push off his wig, which fell into his lap.

"Ten thousand pardons!" she exclaimed, stooping to pick up the wig, and resolutely fixing the eyes on her poor confused victim.

"Louisa! I am ashamed of you!" exclaimed the mother; "you certainly never will be anything but a child. Really, my dear Sir,—anything so alarming, so distressing. You do not care for any one's feelings."

"Do not be quite shocked, my dear Mother, but now allow me to introduce you to an old friend in a natural state. Mr. Pynsent Burton of Fairfield,

brother of my very dear friends, Jessie and Anna; nephew of two most excellent uncles, and member of the best family in the whole world. Forgive me, but I do not think the wig improved you, and your hair is nearly as thick as ever, and you are neither bald nor grey."

The pretty widow had spoken hastily, without looking at Pynsent, holding the wig in her hand. When Pynsent rose, in astonishment, and their eyes fairly met, she added, frankly holding out her right hand—

"Is it possible that you have quite forgotten the *Missey* school-girl whom you used to despise and torment? How altered I must be! But I almost knew you yesterday, and was quite sure of you to-day."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Pynsent, suddenly aroused as from a dream. "I am very glad to see you; I little thought—I little expected—" and he grasped the proffered hand so warmly by way of completing his sentence, that the colour rose brightly in the cheek of the young widow.

"And now you must shake hands with Mamma, who knows you quite well," she said, approaching the invalid, who, in the excitement of the little scene, had actually risen, unaided, from the sofa, and was ready to give Pynsent a friendly greeting.

Pynsent had spoken the truth: he was very glad to see Louisa Colville again; or, as we must now call her, Mrs. Egerton. When he looked at her once more, he was astonished that he had not recognized her. She was quite as pretty as when he saw her at Fairfield: more womanly, of fuller form, older, in short, but the same. There were the same soft blue eyes that kindled into such fun and wickedness at times: the same serene mouth, that became so eloquent of mirth when anything moved the spirit of wit within, and the same clear expression of countenance. The complexion and hair were darker, and the widow's cap was a disguise in itself, and these were the principal changes. She did not look as if grief for a departed husband had very much subdued her spirits. Pynsent felt rather glad than sorry to see those widow's weeds; he did not stop to inquire why, hard-hearted fellow! for he knew that he had no personal interest in the matter: still he looked at them approvingly. He could not imagine that fair young woman with a husband twenty or thirty years older than herself.

"Allow me to restore you your property," said Louisa, gently pushing the wig across the table, "and to beg your pardon for my rudeness; but it was too irresistible. I suppose you think you are too captivating in your own proper head of hair?"

"Louisa!" said Mrs. Colville reproachfully.

"I am only beginning what I used to long to do when I was afraid, Mamma—to pay Mr. Pynsent Burton off for innumerable insults. Do you remember how you used to annoy Anna and me?"

"I only did you justice," said Pynsent; "but Anna, when did you see her last?"

"I have not seen her for some years, and she has quite ceased to correspond with me."

Here followed a long and interesting conversation, during which much was said that has been already mentioned in this history, and some few events that have been omitted. From Mrs. Colville Pynsent learnt that General Colville and Colonel Egerton had both fallen in the dreadful war still carrying on in India, and in which Nelson Burford and Chatham Michelson were engaged. She spoke of Nelson as having acquired a considerable reputation for bravery, and of his promotion to his majority on the field of battle, as a mark of great honour. His courage and prudence were so remarkable, that his men would follow him blindly into any danger or difficulty, and the natives both feared and respected him.

"I met him once," said Louisa, "and inquired after you all at Fairfield. He answered very calmly, until I said something about Anna. You know

the firm expression of mouth he always has, that I used to declare was like one of the lions in the Zoological Gardens when he was meditating a spring. Well, his teeth must have regularly stuck into one another when I asked for Anna. He could not separate them. I had to wait an age for an answer, and then he said he had not heard of Mrs. Michelson for some time. I pitied him when I saw how pale he turned, and felt convinced that he must have been attached to Anna, which I rather suspected at Fairfield. Major Burford is a man I should not like to offend: I am sure he would never forgive."

"He would never forget," said Pynsent; "he is of too noble a nature not to forgive. And what do they say of Michelson?"

"I hear that he and Anna are universal favourites, but I fear they are extravagant. He is as gallant an officer as possible when on duty, but careless in his general habits. In short, he is what he always was, and Anna is as fascinating as ever, and the idol of everybody."

"We hear," said Pynsent, "that she is trying to make up her mind to return to England with her little girl, who is another of the doomed victims of that horrible India. She does not like to leave her husband, and cannot resolve to send the child home: she seems wrapped up in her."

"I saw her once," rejoined Louisa, "after the death of one of her children. I shall never forget her: just as excitable as she used to be in joy, she was in grief, and you would have imagined that the whole world had been suddenly torn from her. Poor Anna!"

"You are not like your sailor brother, Mr. Burton," said Mrs. Colville; "he is so very handsome."

"A doubtful compliment, Mamma," said Louisa.

"Peter and Anna were the beauties of the family," said Pynsent, smiling.

"I greatly admire dark men," said Mrs. Colville; "but I do not quite like your regular brunettes, they want softness. Oh dear me! this conversation is too much for me, I fear."

"That reminds me that I have a dozen patients to see," said Pynsent, starting up and looking at his watch. "It is so pleasant to talk over old times, that I have forgotten my duty."

"And this?" said Louisa, touching the wig.

"I suppose I have forgotten that also," replied Pynsent; "will you give it lodging for the present?"

"Till you go to visit some other lady patients? I will put it up in lavender. I know from whom you stole it."

"And I am to go on with the mixture, and take everything that is strengthening?" asked Mrs. Colville.

Pynsent looked compassionately at Louisa, as he said "Yes;" but there was no sign of discontent or satire in her face. She had resumed the placid demeanour of years gone by.

"You have forgiven me?" she said, almost shyly, as they shook hands.

Pynsent's hearty, friendly look and shake of the hand were the answer, as he hastened away.

That evening Pynsent took himself to task, as was his wont, something as follows:—

"Pish! pshaw! folly! nonsense! If anybody else had been such a fool, I should have voted him to a lunatic asylum. I do not believe I am myself. In short, I always had a certain kind of belief in metempsychosis and transmigration of souls, and somebody else has come into me, I am sure of it. That somebody else has been a confounded sawney, and always falling in love. He saw a school-girl and a baby ten or twelve years ago at his own house, and just because they were pretty, blue-eyed dolls, he fancies himself in love with both, alternately, as they chance to present themselves before him. No, no, as the little woman said, returning from the fair, 'This is none o' me.'

It wasn't Pynsent Burton who was almost sentimental about that pale lily of a child, Tiny, only yesterday, and is indulging in admiring thoughts of that pretty full-blown rose of a mischievous little widow today? If it is, I will never say my soul is my own again, as long as I live. How she is come out! She used to be as shy as a pigeon, now she is able to chatter like a magpie. I wonder whether I should like her more or less than I used to like her, upon further acquaintance. There certainly is a power in early associations that there is in nothing else. I should have passed her by without a second thought, if I had not known her years ago; and now I think her so very pretty and agreeable. Well, here goes! I make a vow that I will never think of any woman again as long as I live;—I, an old bachelor, who have devoted myself to science and—and my dear sister Jessie for life! Come along, old fellow!"

With this winding up, Pynsent opens the bookcase, and takes down a ponderous medical book, into which he resolutely plunges, and, we hope and believe, forgets all the women in the universe before he has read two pages.

But Pynsent is obliged to visit his patient daily; nay, so conveniently near is Duke-street, that he is sometimes sent for twice a day. The ladies

remove into a lodging to continue near him, and Mrs. Colville allows herself to be a trifle better. He sees the pretty school-girl that he lost his heart to years ago, transformed into the almost prettier woman, and he sees her under fresh auspices. As the cheerful nurse and companion of a nervous, *exigeante* mother, her qualities of heart and her disposition are brought out. True, she must have her jest, either half smothered, or sparkling out openly, upon everything that touches her strong sense of the ridiculous, even though that mother be the subject of it; but she is always ready to amuse or attend to the imaginary miseries of the invalid, forgetful of her own amusement.

Thus for about a month Pynsent and Louisa are constantly thrown together; sometimes alone, sometimes with Mrs. Colville. They even have begun to quarrel over a game of chess when Pynsent has a spare hour in the evening, and to make various disputes upon every species of folly. At this epoch Charles and Tiny have returned to take up their abode, until September, in the little cottage at Peckham, resolutely refusing Pynsent's hospitality as regards board and lodging, but taking possession of the old studio at the top of the house, for painting. Pynsent is happy to find that he can meet Tiny without any extraordinary sen-

sations, and treat her in a most brotherly way. He is proud of her, too, in spite of the uncertainty that hangs over her; and when he takes her to call on Mrs. Egerton, and sees the two *adoratas* together, he laughs in his sleeve, and says, "What a fool I have been! the first and last time, however." Then he compares the two, and returns to his notion of metempsychosis. The soft, plump, arch, blue-eyed Louisa; the pale, slight, spiritual, violet-eyed Tiny! Light and dark are not more different. In spite of widowhood, and the past miseries of war and danger, the one is rosy and full of life; whilst the other, just married, and with every hope of the future bright and glorious, is pensive and shadowy, with a certain look of the "grim spectre" in her face.

"Mamma is mad about Fairfield today," said Louisa to Pynsent. "She has suddenly taken it into her head that Fairfield would cure her, and that Jessie would make up for the deficiencies in her daughter. Do you think Jessie would take compassion on us?"

"You shall judge for yourself," said Pynsent, giving a letter to Louisa, who read it, and said—

"Oh, how very kind! Welcome to such poor board and lodging as Fairfield can afford! Dear, happy, quiet Fairfield! And you will all come

down, will you not?" turning to Pynsent, Charles, and Tiny. "Do you remember that one happy Christmas, Tiny? I never knew real happiness before, and scarcely since."

"Nor I, until now," said Tiny timidly.

Before another week was passed, Pynsent, Charles, and Tiny saw Mrs. Colville and her daughter off per railway for Fairfield, and Mrs. Colville's last words were, "I do not know what I shall do without you, Mr. Burton: you have really done me good."

"Fairfield is next best, Mamma," said Louisa, as she waved her hand to her friends, who stood to see the long train of carriages dart past one after another with that speed which so many have attempted, ineffectually, to describe.

"She is very, very nice, is she not, Pynsent?" asked Tiny.

"Very: all ladies are," was the reply.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness."—*King Lear.*

We must allow some six or eight months to pass slowly by, during which time much may have happened of moment that we have not time to chronicle, and much that will evolve in the sequel. The scene is the large airy room in the upper story of Pynsent's house in Duke-street, which has been devoted to Charles as a studio; the actors are the young artist and his wife. The room has an excellent light for painting, and Pynsent has caused it to be made in every possible way commodious and agreeable. It is, like most similar rooms, hung round with sketches of every description. Here is a little bit of English, there of Italian scenery; in one corner the head of a peasant girl, in another the figure of a Swiss hunter; on this side a group of English fishwomen, on that a storm at sea; and so on throughout the studio: little

bits from nature, rough, and, to the uninitiated eye, coarse, and of small value, but ready to be worked into large paintings for immortality. Not the least conspicuous are various sketches of Tiny in different postures, and one or two of Pynsent. There are several easels in the room, on one of which is the picture that first attracted Charles's attention at Peckham, that of the mad beggar, done by Tiny; on another the interior of a prison. Colours, boxes, pieces of rag, canvas, boards for paintings, and brushes, are scattered upon every available table, whilst a copy of Shakspeare and a few other books prove that literature is not forgotten.

We come, at last, to the one grand object of the studio. It is a picture that reaches almost from floor to ceiling. Were it in a frame, it would inevitably suffer the fate of the Vicar of Wakefield's family portraits: it would not get in or out of the door. The subject is from King Lear, and is Lear and Cordelia in prison. The moment chosen is taken from Lear's own words—

> "When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
> And ask of thee forgiveness."

The old king is apparently rising from his kneeling posture, having one arm thrown round Cor-

delia's waist, and one hand in hers, as she attempts to raise him. His eyes are fixed with a loving, helpless, bright insanity upon her face, as she bends slightly over him, whilst hers beam with a filial devotion upon him. Both are portraits. The insane beggar sat to Tiny for King Lear, and Tiny sat to Charles for Cordelia. It is a beautiful picture. Husband and wife have exerted every power of conception and execution to produce it, and the union of love and genius never conceived or executed anything more perfect. As in Charles's last picture, there is a strong light thrown upon the principal figures, which streams through a small grating in the prison, whilst the remainder of the painting is in deep shadow. Cordelia is represented in her queenly robes of Tyrian purple, over which her long hair falls, having escaped from the jewelled head-gear that had been supposed to bind it before she entered the prison. Some of the last effects are now being given to those flowing locks, and Tiny stands, a second Cordelia, with her long hair dishevelled, whilst Charles labours at the picture and portrait. It seems a strange repetition or duplicate, so like is the living, breathing woman to the pale, lovely, half ethereal Cordelia of the picture, bending over her beloved father, and endeavouring to raise him

from his too abject posture: just such a personification of grief, pity, and love might Shakspeare himself have imagined, and just such a face of wild tenderness and joy and madness might he have given to King Lear.

"You are tired, dearest Tiny," says Charles, as he puts one extra ray of light to the beaming eye of Cordelia, and withdraws a pace to see its effect, then looks at his wife. "You will be glad at least when this weary work is done, will you not, my Cordelia?" and he strokes the long hair and kisses the pale cheek.

"Tired? glad? Oh no!" replies Tiny; "when did I ever know what life and enjoyment were before? To paint such a picture, and with you! to have labour, fame, name, life itself, one with you, and to know that as long as any of these last we two live together! Is there anything more to wish in this world?"

"And what do you think of Cordelia?" said Charles, drawing her nearer to the picture.

"That she is beautifully painted, at least," was the reply.

They stood hand in hand for a few seconds before the picture.

"I can improve that!" exclaimed Tiny, suddenly moving off and taking up a brush and

palette; then, standing on a stool before the painting, she added a few white hairs to the head of King Lear, that increased the wildness of the effect.

"The eyes want more melancholy," she said; "how can we give it? There must have been a large proportion of melancholy in his countenance."

"The mouth would convey melancholy as well as the eyes," said Pynsent. "Have you not seen the slight movement of the lips that try to smile make a face much more sad than any amount of expression in the eyes?"

"Yes; but the expression of the eyes is affected by the mouth: both must agree."

"True. Give a touch to that mouth, and you will see the eyes apparently assume a different expression."

And so it proved. The touch of melancholy thrown into the king's face completed the perfection of the whole.

"It cannot be better, Tiny!" exclaimed Charles, delighted.

They continued to work together upon the picture, altering, improving, and adding to, what seemed to want neither alterations, improvements, nor additions; and continuing at intervals the less interesting portions of background and other accessaries.

"My Cordelia looks pale and fagged," said Charles. "I shall be so glad when the Academy opens, and we shall fairly have done our work; for, as long as one day remains, we shall go on with our 'last touches,' and still never think them the last."

"You have promised a visit to Fairfield, if the picture sells. Think of the joy of seeing all that dear party, and taking Jessie your first hundred pounds towards completing the paying off of that odious mortgage!"

"Then Fairfield will be free, and we shall go on with a clear path before us, having all helped to raise the family name and respectability by honest labour and upright intention."

"I rather think we are reckoning without being quite sure of our host," said Tiny timidly. "Remember the fable of the girl and her eggs."

"Without our host? No!" exclaimed Charles. "I am sure of selling this picture: your King Lear alone is worth the money, if there is justice in England."

"Haydon far surpassed my King Lear, and he was not fully appreciated until after his death," suggested Tiny.

"Tiny, you are of a desponding nature."

Poor Tiny was standing, or rather kneeling, on

the topmost step of a pair of steps, painting energetically; but, in truth, she was so tired that her second self, her dear Charles's beautiful Cordelia, began to appear a dreadful uncertainty, and she was thinking, "What if the picture does not sell, after all?" With weariness of body how the hopes grow weary too!

"I see how it is," said Charles, suddenly mounting the steps behind her, and lifting her off, "you are half dead with fatigue. Now, give me the brush and the palette and the apron. There! go and wash your hands, and put up the hair, and make yourself a tidy little Tiny again, and fit for Pynsent's sight."

"I tell you what it is, good people," said a voice in the passage. The door opened, and Pynsent appeared. "I will turn you out of this room, and sentence you to the back attic. Here have I been waiting dinner for this last half-hour, whilst you have been torturing that mad old king and his beautiful, but half-attired, daughter. I mean that as a compliment to you, Mistress Cordelia."

Tiny slipped away to make herself neat.

"You will kill that poor child, Charles, if you let her work so much," said Pynsent. "I tell you she is not equal to it. It was a great mistake to allow you two painters to come together; we shall

see you dying, both of you, not 'of a rose, in aromatic pain,' but 'of oils in consumptive languor.'"

"We must go through with it now," said Pynsent, "but Tiny shall work no more."

In due time the great picture was finished, and sent to the Royal Academy. It commanded at once a good and conspicuous position. Every one had augured, from the last, a first-rate contribution this year, and no one was disappointed.

But Charles and Tiny only waited to see it placed, to start for Fairfield: urged by all their friends, when the labour was over, they sought rest and country air, both of them looking ill, and feeling wearied by intense application. The concentration of the whole powers, both mental and bodily, for one twelvemonth, on one subject, is enough to wear out stronger health than either Charles or Tiny possessed; although, alas! numbers of the equally gifted are frequently compelled to labour for years without either change or holiday.

It remained for Pynsent to watch the effect produced by his brother's picture. He was at the opening of the Exhibition, and tried, in vain, to appear calm, as he listened to the comments made on a painting upon which that brother's livelihood depended for the coming year. Ah! ye critics and

connoisseurs, have some pity when you cut up what has been finished with so much care and anxiety, and think there may be a parent or a brother of the artist at your elbow, hating you, though unknown, for your freedom of opinion!

But Pynsent heard comparatively few disparaging remarks. 'King Lear and Cordelia in Prison' had made his brother's reputation, together with that of his young wife, whose name was henceforth to be immortalized with his.

"What a Lear!" and "What a Cordelia!" were the general expressions. Those who were not connoisseurs enough to recognize the power of the painting, had taste enough to admire the beauty of Cordelia; and those who looked for the wonderful, were satisfied with the face of the King. The two figures, thrown out in strong relief from the dark, massive walls of the prison, with its iron bars and chains, its cup of water and rough pallet and stool, were generally considered as fine as anything in the Exhibition, where so much was admirable.

Pynsent walked through the rooms, and was pleased to find that he saw no purely historical painting that he considered finer than his brother's. He returned to it again in time to see Mr. Michelson approach the picture. He could not help feeling an interest in all that Mr. Michelson did, said,

or thought, though he despised the man. He was too nearly connected with Anna, and had too powerful an influence over her and hers, to be disregarded; moreover he had been the purchaser of Charles's last picture. On the present occasion he felt that his fiat was of importance, and he stood so as to watch the effect the painting might have upon him. He was alone, and so was Pynsent, in the midst of the crowd that surrounded the great attraction. At first he walked leisurely up to the picture, and with book in one hand, and eyeglass in the other, appeared to be about to examine it critically. No sooner however had he glanced at it than he turned very pale; Pynsent thought he would have sunk to the earth; his hands trembled, and the book dropped on the floor, and the glass and chain to their usual places on his waistcoat. Some one near picked up the book, and restored it; he took it mechanically, without any acknowledgment. Every one but Pynsent was too busy with his own affairs to notice Mr. Michelson, but he felt really thankful when he saw that gentleman stagger to a seat opposite the picture: when seated he still gazed, apparently, upon the principal figure, Cordelia, as if transfixed. A gentleman approached him with "Ah! Michelson! how d'ye do? Fine, that, isn't it?"

He seated himself beside Mr. Michelson, who did not appear to notice him.

"You are in a trance, or entranced," said the stranger, giving him a poke with his elbow.

"Ah! yes! Really! is that you, Marshall?" stammered Mr. Michelson at last.

"What do you think of the painting?" asked Mr. Marshall.

"Painting! yes! Can you—can you tell me who that is?"

"That is Cordelia. Have you not seen the catalogue? It is by the same artist, I fancy, who painted your 'Sedgemoor.'"

"What is his name? who is she?"

"The name of both is Burton. 'Mr. and Mrs. C. Burton' is the signature appended to the motto."

"I am not feeling well," said Mr. Michelson, still looking at the picture.

"What is the matter? you are as pale as death."

"I do not know, but if I should be ill, secure that picture for me at any price."

"Shall I help you out, and get a cab?" asked Mr. Marshall anxiously.

"Thank you."

Mr. Michelson rose with difficulty, and, assisted by his friend, left the room, still looking back at the picture. Pynsent followed. When they reached

the steps of the Academy, Pynsent hurried for a cab, and said to Mr. Marshall as he passed him—

"Allow me to call a cab. I have been watching your friend for some time, and saw how ill he looked."

When the cab came, Mr. Michelson could scarcely stand, and Pynsent assisted him into it. Mr. Marshall looked alarmed.

"I am a surgeon; I do not think you need be terrified," said Pynsent; "it appears mere faintness."

"Will you do me the favour of accompanying us?" said Mr. Marshall.

"Pray do," said Mr. Michelson.

The three got into the cab, and drove to Grosvenor Square, Mr. Michelson's residence. Pynsent went into his house for the first time in his life. He told the footman to go at once for his master's medical man. Mr. Michelson did not know him, so he felt his pulse, and said he thought it had been a sudden spasm at the heart, but that he was recovering. Aside to the friend Pynsent declared the attack to have been a very near escape from paralysis. By the time that Dr. Dysart, Mr. Michelson's physician, arrived, the common applications in such cases had taken due effect, and Pynsent slipped away without further delay.

The next thing that Pynsent heard of Mr. Michelson was, that he had purchased Charles's picture, and sent a cheque to him for five hundred pounds. A few weeks afterwards he had a letter from Fairfield, announcing, amongst other matters, the arrival of Mr. Michelson at the Hall, and the report that he was in bad health; also the pleasant intelligence from Jessie, that Charles had paid off one hundred pounds of the mortgage, and that she expected, at Christmas, to pay the remaining fifty, and thus to free Fairfield for ever from this long-standing pump on its constitution. "We intend having a jubilee," she said, "when it is fairly paid, and you are to come down for the occasion. Louisa proposes a champagne supper and ball; and the absurdities constantly suggested amongst us are incredible. Uncle James declares for a bonfire; Captain Burford for an illumination of the three houses, Fairfield, the Grange, and his own; and an especial epistle to Nelson to invite him over for the occasion. I think you and I, at least, shall feel a weight removed from our minds, that has hung over them ever since that day in the hayfield; do you remember it? Louisa is more amusing and charming than ever, and if you do not come down and fall over head and ears in love with her, I will disown you. I willingly relinquish you as a

bachelor-brother upon this condition, and must be contented with Peter. Mrs. Colville is better, and becomes a degree more interesting; she lives on your daily letters of advice, and thinks you much more clever than Uncle Timothy, who has nevertheless to hear all her complaints. His sight is certainly improving; he can now see his way about tolerably, and begins to hope for recovery. Little Pickle is very much like his uncle, godfather, and namesake, and wants to see you very much. He takes immensely to Tiny, as who does not? Tiny quite devotes herself to Uncle Timothy, and they suit each other famously."

Not long after the receipt of this letter there came Indian news of great importance, that occasioned tears of pride at once, and sorrow, to our friends. The war was drawing to a close, and the papers contained frightful accounts of havoc amongst our troops, made by the expiring efforts of Indian valour. Major Burford had been sent into the interior, and his division had been surprised by a large army of natives. He and his men had fought so desperately, that they put their enemies to flight, but just as the tide of victory was turning in his favour, he received a cut on his right arm that entirely disabled it. "Fearing," the journal proceeded to say, "that his disappear-

ance might discourage his men, and give new hopes to the enemy, he instantly took up his sword with his left arm, and waving it over his head, shouted to his men "Victory," and impelling his horse onwards, dashed after the enemy, followed by the remainder of his battalion. This last gallant effort won the day. In a few minutes afterwards this noble officer was seen to fall from his horse, and as the officer who fought near him, Captain Wright, dismounted to assist him, he perceived, for the first time, that the Major held his sword with his left hand, and that he was fainting from loss of blood, owing to a wound that had nearly severed his right arm from his body. We hear that his Christian name is Nelson: a fitting representative of that illustrious hero. His arm is amputated, but he is doing well. We have no doubt that speedy promotion and honour will follow this gallant action. The enemy were entirely routed by the soldiers, infuriated at the wound their deservedly beloved officer had received, and there have been few passages in the story of Indian warfare more honourable both to the commander and his men."

The next mail brought a letter from Nelson, or rather dictated by him, and signed with his left hand. Many a tear did that letter occasion to the good Captain Burford and Jessie, as they read it

over and over again, with pride and sorrow. It was so modest, so genuine; he only regretted the loss of his arm, because it prevented him from pursuing the career he had begun; he did not glory in the fact that he was to retire upon full pay and a colonelcy; he scarcely mentioned it; neither did he do more than slightly allude to the gratification he had experienced in receiving a testimonial from his brother officers, in the shape of a massive inkstand of Indian gold; but he hoped that "he should be a better son to his excellent father with his one arm, than he had been with two."

The 'Gazette' of the following month reported Captain Michelson either killed or taken prisoner in a skirmish with the natives, but brought no letters either from Nelson or Anna, and the state of anxiety experienced by our party at Fairfield will be readily understood by all who have had relations in India during times of war; that terrible India! which carries off so many of our best and bravest, either never to return, or to return changed and aged themselves, and finding every one they loved changed and aged as well.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,
Calm or convulsed,—in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving;—boundless, endless, and sublime,
The image of eternity,—the throne
Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made: each zone
Obeys thee; thou goest forth dread, fathomless, alone."

BYRON.

We must retrace the steps we have taken with some of our friends, in order to pursue our course for a time with others; and we must transport ourselves to the deck of a vessel just about to sail from India to England. A boat has reached the ship with the last news of the war, and there is a great commotion amongst the crew and passengers eager to gain the latest intelligence. No authentic despatches have been yet published, but various reports of the killed and wounded in a late engagement have been spread.

Amongst the passengers eagerly taking leave of friends, or seeing to luggage, or listening to the

news just imported, are Anna Michelson and her little girl. Surrounded by a group of friends, who have come to see them on board, they look melancholy and tearful, as if leaving India were a sad thing to both.

"Tell my husband that I shall write whenever it is possible," said Anna to a lady who was holding her hand. "If I could only have waited for him I should not have cared, but alone with this poor sick child! Oh, Mrs. Merton, it is dreadful! And then the uncertainty of hearing from him! and the war!" Poor Anna's tears flowed apace.

Just as she heard that there was intelligence of the war there was an order to clear the decks, and her friends were obliged to leave her.

"You will find the captain most attentive, and everything that can be done is arranged for your comfort. The surgeon is a very clever, intelligent man, and will be everything to Missey," said one of the gentlemen, as he pressed Anna's hand and turned away.

Anna was squeezing through the crowd, to gain a last look at her friends as they descended to the boat, when she heard some one near her say—

"I hear that Major Michelson's wife is on board: I hope she has not heard, for these sudden reports are often unfounded."

"'He and the whole troop cut to pieces' was the last news," said some one else.

Anna gave a loud shriek, and turned round to discover the speakers, but fell down insensible on the deck before she could perceive them.

A black woman, her child's nurse, who had been standing with the little girl at a distance, ran forward, and, taking her in her arms, bore her out of the crowd. A tall military-looking man, who was standing near, attracted by the cry, followed, and asked the woman in Hindostanee whether he could be of any assistance. She begged him to take care of the little girl, whilst she and an elderly man, a fellow-servant, carried their mistress to her cabin below. The gentleman took the child's hand, and walked with her about the deck in search of the surgeon, whom he found, and sent at once to Anna. Meanwhile the ship was under weigh, and they were floating over the Indian Ocean.

"I cannot walk any more," said little Anna, "I will go to Mamma, if you please."

The tall gentleman looked at the child, and immediately perceived that she was ill. She was, as so many English-Indian children are, pale and sickly; she was tall and thin, with large eyes and long eyelashes, that gave the idea of consumption;

she was more like her father than her mother, and had all his bright restlessness of expression.

"May I go to Mamma?" she said again, "I am so tired."

"Will you not sit down here a very little with me, and watch the ship sail away from India?" asked the stranger, leading her gently to a bench. "Shall you like to go to England?"

"I don't know: I shall like to see my aunt and my little brother, but I shall not like to leave my papa."

"And will you tell me what your name is?"

"Missey—they all call me Missey."

"But you have a Christian name,—some other name besides Missey?"

"Oh yes; little Annabella, Papa calls me, because, he says, my mamma is big Annabella."

"Annabella," repeated the stranger, looking into the child's face, "that is a pretty name."

"And my mamma is very pretty," said little Anna, a flush so bright spreading over her face, that the stranger thought she had suddenly been restored to perfect health by the sea-breeze; "my mamma is beautiful, everybody says so. But I am so tired,—I must go to my mamma."

"I will take you soon, if nurse does not come back for you; but if you put up the little feet, so,

and rest your head against me, so, I think you will be more comfortable."

The stranger procured a cloak to put under her and arranged her little faded figure upon it, making her use his knee as a pillow, and in a few minutes she was asleep. He smoothed her hair and laid his hand on her little shoulder protectingly, drawing a heavy sigh as he did so.

Shortly afterwards the man-servant appeared.

"I beg your pardon, Sir, I fear Missey is troublesome. Poor dear! shall I take her down to the cabin?" he said.

"Not unless you particularly wish it—not on my account," said the gentleman. "How is your mistress?"

"As bad as can be, Sir. She is no sooner out of one fit than she is into another: I never saw any one take on so; and, maybe, it is not true after all."

"You mean the sudden news from the interior?"

"Yes, Sir. They say my master and all his men have been regularly butchered."

"Was Major Michelson your master? and is that lady his wife, and this his child?" asked the stranger, with a start of surprise and distress.

"Too surely, Sir," said the man; "and God help my poor mistress, for she doted on him,

though they did say—" the man checked himself.

The gentleman suddenly raised his hand from little Anna, and drew it across his eyes.

"Shall I take the young lady, Sir?" asked the man.

"It seems a pity to disturb her. When she awakes I will bring her down to you. There does not seem to be any positive certainty of this dreadful event having happened. Is there no one who will tell your mistress so?"

"Oh yes, Sir; all the lady passengers are trying hard to make her believe it, when she is sensible; but she can only repeat the words, 'He and the whole troop cut to pieces!' over and over again, as if she had no tongue for anything else."

"God help her!" ejaculated the unknown.

The child slept on peaceably, unconscious of what was passing beneath and around her.

The black nurse came to see after her, and to thank the stranger for his kindness.

"The ladies think, Sir, that the sight of Missey might restore her mamma," she said; "but I am afraid for the dear child. She is too weak to bear any exertion, and so fond of her mamma, that I think it would be her death if she saw her as she is now."

This passed in Hindostanee.

The little girl must have heard it in her sleep, for she suddenly aroused herself, and in a pettish but authoritative voice said—

"No, it would not; I will go to my Mamma directly. Take me to Mamma;" and herewith she began to cry.

"Oh dear! oh dear! we must not let her cry for the world. Missey, darling! don't cry, you shall come to your Mamma directly;" and, taking the poor, sickly, spoilt child in her arms, the black woman carried her down to the cabin that had been appropriated to their especial service.

Here two or three lady-passengers were endeavouring to comfort Anna, and the surgeon was still using restoratives, in the hope of calming the paroxysms of grief, which, with her usual impetuosity, she allowed to have full vent.

"Mamma! my own Mamma!" cried the little Anna as the nurse brought her into the cabin, "what is the matter? Don't cry so, my own Mamma!" and she jumped from the nurse's arms into those of her mother, and began to sob and scream almost as violently.

"You will kill Missey, Ma'am," said the servant in a tone of extreme alarm.

The words had the desired effect. In a moment

Anna rose from the sofa on which she had thrown herself, and subduing the rising scream, took her child in her arms, and begged her to be quiet for her sake. The surgeon told the ladies that he thought they had better leave them together for a short time, and, giving a few directions to Susannah, the nurse, quitted the cabin himself.

It was a long time before the mother and nurse could succeed in calming the excited and sobbing child. She had much of Anna's impetuosity of nature, and she was dangerously ill. It was on her account wholly that they were now leaving India,—a last hope, and a forlorn one, of saving her life. The other children had died at her age, and of the same complaint. The affection of both parents was centred in her, and all, even to the leaving Major Michelson behind, must be sacrificed to her.

"What is the matter, my own Mamma?" was the cry of the child as she gazed into her mother's swollen and pallid face, so changed in one short hour.

"It is only leaving India and your Papa, Missy dear," whispered the nurse.

"Then let us go back again directly. Why did we come away?"

At last they succeeded in pacifying her, and in

getting her to lie down on the sofa. Anna was obliged to sit on a low stool at her side, to hold her hand, and to lean over her: it was a touching picture. The child soon sobbed herself to rest; the mother still watched, motionless, for fear of disturbing her; her head resting on one arm on the head of the sofa, her eyes bent on her last, only hope. Tears, that she could not move to wipe away, fell on the child's hair in torrents, and made it wet, as with the rain from heaven. The poor black servant knelt down in a corner of the cabin, and said her simple prayers.

And still the beautiful ship sailed over a smooth sea, away from sultry India, towards Anna's native land that she had so often longed to see.

All this time the strange gentleman was pacing the deck, turning, from time to time, to the cabin stairs, in the hope of seeing some one who might tell him of Mrs. Michelson and her child. The surgeon satisfied him that the great shock had passed away, and that Anna was tolerably calm, but he had never, he said, seen such passionate grief.

There was an expression of melancholy in the stranger's face as he turned away from the surgeon and went to look out upon the broad ocean. It was a grave, calm face, and belonged to a soldier-like and dignified figure.

More than a week passed before he saw his little friend Anna again. Both she and her mother had been ill; sea-sickness added to the grief of the one, and the weakness of the other had quite prostrated them, and the black nurse said she did not think that either of them would reach England, if some change for the better did not take place.

At last, however, one clear, sunshiny afternoon, the child was brought on deck. She asked at once for the kind gentleman; who came to her from a group of passengers with whom he had been conversing. He was shocked to see how much worse the little girl looked. A kind of sofa-bed had been made for her upon deck, by her nurse, and he sat down by her side. Her mother had tied her white frock and hair with black ribbons, and she said confidentially in a whisper—

"Mamma cries all day long; and she has cut off all her beautiful black hair, and put on her black satin gown, and made an ugly cap, and put me on these black ribbons, and they won't tell me why. Will you tell me?"

"I cannot, dear," said the stranger, looking into the wistful little face.

"I like you," said the child, putting her thin hand into his. "You are kind, like my own papa. What is your name?"

"You may call me what you like," was the reply.

"Then I will call you Uncle, because of my own Uncle Pynsent that Mamma talks about."

The stranger smiled sadly.

"Missey must not talk much, Sir," said the servant.

"Then I must read to her, to amuse her."

"Oh yes! if you please," said little Anna eagerly. The gentleman went down to his cabin and began to turn over his store of books. He searched in vain for anything that seemed to promise amusement to a child. At last he took a large Bible in his hand and returned to the deck.

"Oh, that is a Bible!" exclaimed the child with an air of disappointment; "that is a Sunday book."

"But suppose we see what a pleasant book it is for every day. Do you know all the beautiful stories of children that there are in that book?"

"No, I never read any stories in it," said the child, brightening up.

"And did no one never read them to you?"

"No; it was so hot, and I used to be so tired on a Sunday. Mamma and Papa used to read it out loud sometimes, but I did not know what it meant. They told me that it was the book that taught us to be good and to go to heaven, where

my little brothers are gone. I wonder whether I shall go to heaven and see them again?"

"Yes, if you are like the good people the Bible tells us of."

"But I don't think I am very good."

"Then you must pray to be made good; but we will see what the Bible says."

The stranger opened upon the story of Joseph, always so delightful to children. He did not read it, but he related it, adding vivid descriptions of scenery here and there, or places, such as his knowledge or imagination supplied, and which served to fix the little girl's attention. He had evidently the talent of a story-teller—one as rare as useful. The black nurse, as well as the child, fixed her eyes on the speaker; and, somewhat to his annoyance, he soon perceived a little group of sailors standing at a respectful distance, and listening attentively. His audience was satisfactory, inasmuch as they seemed quite awake to the story. Little Anna was breathless until Joseph was out of prison, at which part of the history her friend told her that he feared she would be tired if she listened too long at a time, and that they would finish it the following day.

Day after day the little reading party met on the deck, and each day the child seemed more and

more interested in what she heard. The gentleman did not confine himself to the stories in the Old Testament, but managed to make the parables and historical portion of the New pleasant and intelligible by illustration and explanation. The life and sufferings of our blessed Saviour took a strong hold on Anna's mind, and, with a beautiful faith, she readily appropriated the fact that He had died for her.

"Now, Mamma, I am sure that I shall go to heaven, and see my little brothers again," she said one day, "because Jesus Christ died to take me there."

Her mother was frightened. She thought her child was surely going to die, and almost resolved to put a stop to the readings. But little Anna's will was too absolute for this. She went through, with tearful eyes and animated gestures, the account she had heard of our Saviour's sufferings on the Cross; and ended by saying that He had invited little children to come to Him, and she was going. She should not be afraid to go to Christ, because he was so gentle and kind.

Anna folded her in her arms and wept over her, and entreated her not to say such things, or she would kill her; and then the child wept, and asked her mother to come and see the good uncle that she had found.

That evening, when the burning sun was set, and the air becoming cool, Anna stole, for the first time, to the deck with her child and the nurse. She stood and watched the waves as they rose around the ship, and fell back again into the immensity of ocean. Wild and melancholy thoughts flowed in with them. They were interrupted by little Anna's exclamation of—

"There he is, Mamma! Will you send for him? Oh, do send for him!"

"As you like, my love," was her reply, almost heedlessly.

"I will go," said the child; and she crept away followed by her nurse, for, alas! she had not the spring and elasticity of childhood to enable her to bound towards her friend.

He had seen them standing together at the side of the vessel, and, as if fearful of intruding upon the widow, was about to descend the cabin stairs.

"Will you come and see Mamma?" said little Anna, taking his hand.

"Will you give her my card first of all, and then say I will come if she wishes?" said the gentleman, putting his hand into his pocket and drawing out a card.

Little Anna gave it to the nurse, saying—

"You go; I will stay with my uncle."

In a short time the nurse returned with a request that the gentleman would go to her mistress. He turned very pale, but giving his hand to little Anna, he walked towards her mother.

They found her leaning against the side of the vessel, with her face seaward. Was it the Anna Burton of olden time? So pale—so harassed—her dark hair gone—a widow's cap making her look still paler—and her figure bent by grief! The stranger gazed on her as he approached. "Can it be?" he murmured.

"Mamma! here he is," said little Anna, pulling her dress.

She held out her hand, whilst her head sank down. The gentleman took it. Why does he take it in his left hand? Alas! why?

Ten years' sorrow and warfare have changed them both—Nelson and Anna. It is a sad meeting: sympathy and duty on the one side, repentance and grief on the other.

The one is returning home laden with honours and respected by all men, but bereft of a right arm and with shattered health; the other is returning with a dying child, leaving, she believes, a dead husband behind her, and with a mind and body borne down by affliction: and thus they meet after all that passed years ago! How many

such meetings are there not in the course of this life!

It is now for Nelson to support and comfort the broken-hearted woman who nearly broke his strong heart in those early days. There is no reproach or anger now in his voice or look. He has faced death in many ways lately,—eye to eye in battle, and tooth to tooth on the sick bed; and he has conquered the enemy for the present, and with him all old animosities. He sees in Anna the friend of his youth and the widow of his friend.

"God will help you, Anna," he says gently, his manly voice choked by an emotion that has nothing selfish in it.

She turned her large black eyes full upon him, and burst into tears.

He led her gently to the stairs, asking if he might come to her in her cabin.

"By-and-by," she answered; and leaving him and little Anna on deck, she went to her cabin followed by the nurse.

In a short time he took little Anna down, and told her to go in and ask whether he might see her mamma. He was admitted. He seated himself opposite Anna, who was on a sofa; and the child, with her usual sickly "I am so tired, Mamma!" lay down by her mother's side, and soon fell

asleep. The interview was awkward at first, but Nelson's self-possession soon made it pleasant.

"I am ordered home," he said, "both because I am useless in the army now"—glancing at the empty sleeve of his coat buttoned up to his waistcoat—"and because the amputation of my arm left me so ill and weak, that a change was absolutely necessary. So I have looked my last on India, and on my profession." This was said with a sigh.

"Oh! they will all be so glad to see you. You have, at least, lost nothing of the love they always bore you," said Anna.

"I do not know; I am so altered."

Anna could have said, 'You look better and handsomer than ever,' but she refrained. She had a great fear of Nelson, and the old sin against him was uppermost in her mind. She longed to say something of her husband, but this consciousness prevented her. Nelson anticipated her.

"I think," he said gravely, "you are wrong to give full belief to any unaccredited reports. We have all been killed, over and over again, by sudden reports. I was once said to have been cut down in an engagement with the Natives, when I had actually made them surrender to a man. In my last battle, where I lost the most valuable part

of myself, I was reported dead. You must, at least, think imprisonment or captivity quite as probable as death; and now there is sure to be an exchange of prisoners, and at least temporary cessation of hostilities."

"Oh! if I could think so!" said Anna, clasping her hands and allowing one of the old gleams of amination to shoot from her eyes.

Nelson saw it and withstood it.

"We will hope it, at least. When did you see him last?"

"He was with me till within the last three weeks arranging everything for our departure. Then his regiment was ordered to go to the interior to help the —th Bengal Light Cavalry, and we were separated at almost an hour's notice.

"And you were obliged to sail so soon?"

"Yes; he left me with the understanding that I was on no account to change our plans. He said the life of our child depended upon her going at once to England, and everything else must give way to that. His return was uncertain, but it was rather expected his regiment would be ordered home shortly after this expedition."

"You go direct home?"

"Yes, I have written to announce our coming."

"I can imagine the state of excitement they are

all in at the prospect of seeing you again. I did not say when I should return, but in a general way hinted at the probability of its being soon. I shall find my father much altered, I fear."

"Jessie says he is just the same as ever."

"Do you know Aunt Jessie?" here broke in little Anna, roused from her usually slight slumber by a sudden noise on deck.

"Yes, dear, I have known her all my life," replied Nelson, with a pleasanter smile than we have seen on his face since he has been on board.

"And do you love her as Mamma does?"

"Everybody loves your Aunt Jessie, little Anna, and I hope you will grow up as good as she is."

The bigger Anna could not help glancing at Nelson's face with some degree of curiosity as he said this, but there was nothing to be remarked in it but a look of sincerity that Jessie would have liked to see, because it told that he spoke from his heart.

"I fear it is getting late, and that I am detaining you," said Nelson, rising. "Remember, Anna, we are very old friends, and that I am sufficiently aged and sobered to be considered your and little Anna's protector. You must look upon me as such during the remainder of the voyage, and let me save you all trouble and harass."

Anna thanked him, and, although she felt the strangeness of their mutual positions, considering the past, she did not hesitate frankly to accept his offer; and there was something in his manly tone and bearing which, whilst it awed her, convinced her that she might trust in him as in her brother.

CHAPTER XL.

"Cease here longer to detain me,
Fondest mother, drown'd in woe;
Now thy kind caresses pain me:
Morn advances—let me go.

"See yon orient streak appearing!
Harbinger of endless day.
Hark! a voice, the darkness cheering,
Calls my new-born soul away."—CECIL.

POOR Anna had great need of protection and kindness during the remainder of that weary and melancholy voyage, and well was it for her that she had Nelson to help and comfort her. Little Anna grew weaker and weaker every day, and the "I am so tired!" was repeated so often that it became a painful reminder of the precarious state of her health. She did not suffer any pain, but seemed to be literally wasting away. She was a perfect shadow, and was the object of pity, sorrow, and affection of all the ship's crew and passengers. No one but Anna had a hope of her recovery: few thought she would live to reach England. For-

tunately they had a favourable passage, and consequently the sick child was not much disturbed by adverse winds or storms. As the ship glided gently over the bosom of the deep, so her young spirit seemed to be quietly gliding away to eternity. As she grew weaker, she became less restless, and was quite happy to be laid upon the sofa in the cabin, or upon a temporary bed on deck, when strong enough, provided she had her mamma or Nelson by her side. The Bible stories and the kind narrator's patience were inexhaustible. She took more and more pleasure in listening to them, and would generally fall asleep with her hand clasped in her mother's whilst Nelson spoke or read. He was so earnest himself in what he did, and related so simply and clearly, that Anna became also a gratified and benefited listener, and wondered, as she looked at the shattered soldier, what power had converted him into so gentle and humble a Christian.

One day she took courage to ask him what had made him so well acquainted with his Bible. He opened its first leaf and showed it to her. "Nelson Burford, from his loving father," was written there, and underneath the words "Fight the good fight of faith."

"Anna," said Nelson solemnly, "I owe to my

father, whom I grievously offended, and to your sister, all my religious impressions. When I returned to India last, it was with no very kindly feelings. I seemed to owe a grudge to all the world, and my only wish was to die in battle. Forgive me for speaking plainly: it is best for us both that you should understand me. I had a demon within me. This mood lasted a long time, and I did not care to struggle against it: I was morose to my friends—a fiend to myself. One day I was ill, and, wonderful for me, confined to my bed. It was a Sunday. I always preserved too great a regard for the day, and too vivid a recollection of early habits, to read profane literature on that day, therefore took up the Bible, a book, I am sorry to say, that I had not for some time read much of. I thought I would open it by chance, and see what chapter or verse would best suit my mood. I opened the titlepage, and read my father's favourite text, 'Fight the good fight of faith.' I paused upon it, and suddenly the remembrance of the day when he gave me the Bible flashed upon me—the day of my first start for India, some thirteen years before. I saw his kind face and tearful eyes: I recalled every word that he then uttered. 'Read it, boy, and never be ashamed of it. I have weathered many a storm, and been on

strange waters, but have always found that book my surest compass.' Those were his exact words. Suddenly the whole scene was before me. Pynsent and Jessie had come to see the last of me. There was my father's rough, kind face, Pynsent's friendly eyes, and Jessie's sweet smile and sisterly words. Brother and sister they had always been to me, and he a father to all of us. From that one day of sickness I date my return to my own natural self, and, I hope, my restoration to something like right reason. I have never ceased to think of those three friends as they then appeared to me. The intermediate years have seemed to vanish, and I feel that I, a maimed and grey-haired man, shall meet my father in hale middle age, and those friends of my childhood still the boy and girl I left them."

Anna looked with astonishment upon the man she had always thought so unsentimental. There was a pleasant dreaminess in his countenance that made her fancy he was even then calling up those early scenes. She wondered whether there were any affection still left for herself, or whether she, too, had returned in his imagination to the pert child of ten, whom he used to spoil and lecture by turns.

"And the Bible?" asked little Anna, who had

been listening to the conversation with closed eyes, as she often did. "Did you love the pretty stories as I love them now, and learn to tell them so nicely?"

"Yes, little Anna; I learnt by degrees to love and reverence what God has mercifully taught you to love so young."

"And how did Aunt Jessie help you to be good?"

"By being good herself, and so setting a good example to every one else."

"And will you marry Aunt Jessie, Uncle? it would be so nice!"

Nelson actually blushed, but there was no hesitation in his answer.

"Your Aunt Jessie is too good for me, little Anna. I am afraid I shall die an old, old, lonely bachelor."

"I should just like to see Aunt Jessie before I go to heaven, Mamma. Do you think I shall? The ship is so slow—so slow!"

"My own darling, do not talk so!" cried Anna, bursting into tears, and taking her child in her arms.

"The ship is so slow—so slow!" Oh, how often were these words repeated during that sad and dreary voyage! How often did the melan-

choly mother pray for some sudden wind to waft the vessel more swiftly on its course. It was dreadful to watch the poor child becoming weaker almost daily, and to see nothing but vast ocean stretching far, far away into the still vaster sky. No trace of land anywhere: no hope of it for fifteen, twenty, long, long days and nights.

"When shall we get to England, Uncle?" the wistful child would ask. "If I go to heaven before the ship gets there, what will they do with me? Don't let them put me into the sea: let them take me to Fairfield. I don't think I could get to heaven out of the deep, deep sea."

"Oh, my God, if thou wilt graciously permit us to reach home first!" became also the one prayer of the mother. "I should die, I am sure I should die, if my child were to be committed to those roaring waves. Oh! I am punished enough for all my folly, in the death of all who are dearest to me: add not this to my cup, oh, gracious Lord!"

From the cabin to the deck, from the deck to the cabin, all day and night long, roamed Anna, like one bewildered, in the vain hope of seeing land. Truly she found no rest for the soles of her feet. Both crew and passengers wondered and pitied; but such were Anna's manners and appearance,

that no one dared to express to her their feelings for her. Haughty and impetuous still, with flashing eyes and prouder step than of old, her grief seemed to awe rather than command instant sympathy. Nelson alone could soothe and comfort. She turned to him for support, as to a father or a husband.

And he, too, was always uttering the same prayer, but in calmer words. "Mercifully grant that she die not upon the pathless waters," were the words of his heart almost all day long.

The poor black nurse could do little but cry, and her tears and ejaculations said the same thing —"Not here, O Lord, not here!"

The kind surgeon could give little hope of the child's lasting long. "She was too weak," he said, "too far gone when she set out for England. She might go off in a moment in her sleep."

Anna had counted the hours of those last ten days. Two hundred and forty hours! Almost every hour that passed was struck off like a schoolboy's holiday-calendar.

"Can you see the land yet, Mamma?" would be again and again the child's anxious question, until Nelson entreated her to ask him instead of her mother, because it gave her such pain.

Never did shipwrecked mariners look for land more ardently than did those four watchers.

Then came the first adverse wind: within five days' sail of England, and as good as a day lost by contrary winds. Although the captain declared that he had never before had so prosperous a voyage, and although, on her passage to India, Anna herself had been becalmed for two or three days, she thought that God had forsaken her, and was deaf to her prayers, on account of that one short delay.

It was in vain that Nelson said, "Anna, we are all in the power of One who 'holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hands,' and can, if He will, engulf us all at one sudden blast."

"Better, far better, to die so, than for her to die here, and leave me without her," was Anna's reply.

Nelson wondered how the one sorrow could, apparently, swallow up the other. She seemed to have forgotten the loss of her husband, in the approaching departure of that beloved child.

"My brother Chatham will be so glad to see you, Mammy dear," said little Anna, with that desire to comfort that even children of keen affections possess; "if I am gone to heaven, he will be at Fairfield."

"He does not know me—he will not love me: what is all the world, to you, my own darling?"

"You love me very much, Mamma, and I love you dearly, dearly,—but God loves us best of all."

Anna could only cover her child's face with tears, and turn away to moan and weep. They used to carry little Anna upon deck, when the surgeon thought her strong enough to bear it; and when there, she would ask, faintly, to be turned towards Fairfield; she would then fix her large, unearthly eyes upon the point indicated to her, and would scarcely remove them until she was obliged to return to the cabin.

"Uncle Pynsent will see us first," she said to Nelson; "will he come to meet us?"

"I have no doubt he will if he can, my love."

"Will you ask him to let me go to Fairfield? I mean, if I do not go to heaven first,—you know what I mean."

"I will do what you wish, little Anna, but we must not talk to Mamma of these things: you know God will do what is best for you."

"Yes. Do you remember how Christ raised the widow's son, and that rich man's little girl? Perhaps he will make me well; but I should as soon go to my little brothers, if Mamma would let me, and if I could only see Fairfield first."

It was strange how the idea of Fairfield and her Aunt Jessie haunted the child.

Anna, too, was always talking of Jessie. How is it, that when deep sorrow falls upon us, we always turn to the gentle and true-hearted for comfort and support, however much we may have neglected them in joy? Not that Anna had ever, by thought, word, or deed, neglected Jessie; she loved her always, but she knew she had been guilty of a grievous wrong towards her: her only desire was to repair it.

"If I had but Jessie with me," she would say to Nelson, "I do not think I should be so very, very wretched."

"Jessie is always a consoler," Nelson said, with that smile which he only wore when her name was mentioned; "but there is One, Anna, who will do more for us than any earthly friend."

"I try, Nelson, I try; but I have been so wilful, so foolish all my life, that I cannot go to Him as Jessie would; He is punishing me now for a thousand errors that only He and my own heart are conscious of. If you only knew how I have irritated and vexed the kindest and best of husbands by mere vanity, you would despise me: yes, I am punished deservedly."

"Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, Anna; God is only bringing you to Him by that surest path, affliction."

Anna had said rightly that she had frequently vexed and annoyed her husband, almost beyond endurance. Her beauty and various charms had drawn around her a crowd of admirers and worshipers in India, and such was her innate love of admiration, that she had not been able to resist them as she should. Flattered and caressed, she had too often forgotten her husband in the society of others; and, although never unmindful of propriety and mere outward decorum, had allowed her mind to rejoice in her many conquests, rather as an unmarried flirt, than as a prudent married woman. Chatham never for a moment ceased to love her, and her folly had pained him severely. When he seriously represented her conduct to her, she would laugh, put her arms round his neck, and, in her old coaxing way, kiss him into good-humour and forgiveness. Still he felt her neglect, and could scarcely believe in her real affection for him. It was not until they parted that they were fully aware how dear they were to each other; and it was then that Anna, with the really generous openness of her character, entreated forgiveness for all her levity, assured him that there was no one in the wide world that she loved as she did him, and confessed to him that vanity was her one besetting sin, and had

been ever the great stumbling-block in her path of duty.

But this last, tardy confession was but a small consolation to her, when she reflected that the generous, brave, and unselfish lover and husband was now no more; and that she had been but an ungrateful and vain wife, at least, in return for all his devotion and constancy. Where should she find another Chatham?—one who had married her in spite of the opposition of friends—in spite of her many known faults—in spite of her position and circumstances? Oh! remorse of conscience, and agony for his loss, were sufficient punishments for her ill-conduct to Nelson, she thought, without the addition of the sufferings of her child, and the hourly prospect of her death.

Through all these conflicting feelings,—misery without consolation—remorse without the chance of proving her repentance—thoughts of the past without hope of the future—such grief as mothers alone can know for the treasure about to be removed—and a fear of the anger of the Almighty upon one who had been brought up in His ways, and who felt she had strayed so far from them,—Anna's voyage at last drew to a close.

It was a fine September afternoon, verging upon the evening, when our friends were, as usual, upon

deck, straining their eyes towards the point where England was sure to be. The child seemed to have slightly amended, and her mother began to express hopes that, if she could but reach Fairfield alive, she might be spared to her. Nelson dared not to encourage such hopes, but strove to turn her mind towards the necessity of resignation to the dispensations of a higher Power.

"How beautiful the sun is, Mamma!" said little Anna as she gazed upon the sky; "it looks as if it was walking down into the sea. What are they doing at Fairfield now?"

"Probably gathering in the harvest, my love."

Nelson and Anna were side by side, and the remembrance of old harvest-homes at Fairfield suddenly shot through them both, and therewith a vision of Jessie, the presiding spirit. Nelson seemed to long to pierce through that glorious red heaven, to the Fairfield beyond it, as did the child, who expressed his thought.

"If I were in the sun, I would not go down into the sea, but I would stop at Fairfield. Ah! what is that, Mamma? I see something coming between the sun and the sea,—far, far away. Is that Fairfield?"

"Land! land!" shouted a joyful voice from some other point of the ship.

"I have seen Fairfield," said little Anna, whilst a sudden glow overspread her face; but the excitement was too much for her, and she was obliged to be taken down to the cabin.

All that night, whilst the gallant ship was making rapid progress athwart the dark waters towards that "Land of Promise," the well-beloved England, the child was, to all appearance, passing away. She did not speak, but lay, as in a soft sleep, scarcely breathing. Oh! who shall tell the prayers of that agonized mother? Should her child die within sight of land—within a few hours' sail of her brother's home!

No; those prayers were heard. Even whilst she knelt by her child's couch, and seemed to await her last breath, Nelson, who had been pacing, half the weary night through, upon deck, came to tell her that they were sailing on the Thames, and would soon be in the docks.

"Thank God!" was all she said, as she burst into a flood of tears.

The child was aroused, and understood that all was right.

"Don't cry, Mamma, we are come to Fairfield," she murmured.

They wrapped her in shawls and cloaks, and carried her upon deck. Way was instantly made

for this precious burden, that crew and passengers had so long contemplated with pity, and Nelson was amongst the first to touch land, followed closely by Anna and the nurse bearing the child.

He looked round in search of Pynsent. Whose was the anxious face that suddenly met his from amongst the crowd? A lady standing by a gentleman.

"There she is!" said the gentleman; but the lady still looked at Nelson.

"Nelson!"

"Jessie!" were soon the exclamations of the pair, succeeded by "Here you are, Anna!" "Pynsent! I am so thankful!" from the brother and sister.

Jessie and Anna were once more in each other's arms, but only for a moment.

"Take her, Jessie, she is dying!" were Anna's first words, as she took little Anna from the nurse and laid her slight form in Jessie's arms. "It is Aunt Jessie, darling," she added to the child.

"Oh, my Aunt!" said the little one, as she made an effort to put her arms round her neck; "then we are come to Fairfield."

She scarcely opened her eyes, but was in a dreamy state of half-unconsciousness.

Pynsent had a carriage waiting as near as pos-

sible, into which he put Anna, Jessie, and the nurse and child, and ordered them at once to Duke-street. Jessie and Nelson had not even shaken hands; all thought was for the child.

Little Anna was soon laid in the comfortable bed prepared for her and her mother. It was in vain for Jessie to entreat her sister to take off her travelling-dress, and make herself comfortable: as long as the little girl was talking incoherently of being at Fairfield, she could not be prevailed upon to quit her bedside.

"Is this Aunt Jessie?" asked the child, as Jessie bent over her to arrange her pillows: "may I see the pigeons? where is my brother?"

"You must try to sleep first, darling," whispered Aunt Jessie, kissing the wasted cheek; "you cannot see anything until you have slept."

"Will you stay here, and Mamma, and Uncle? Uncle Nelson, I mean?"

"We will all be with you, my love, only try to sleep."

"I will—kiss me first; and Mamma—kiss me first, and I will say Uncle Nelson's prayer. 'O Lord, take care of thy little child, and make me fit for heaven, for Christ's sake.' Now will you say 'Our Father'?"

Little Anna put her hands together, and as Jessie

knelt down, and said the Lord's Prayer, her lips moved.

"Good night, Mammy dear. Good night, Aunt Jessie." And in a few minutes the poor exhausted child was asleep.

As usual, a nurse! Why was there always sickness where Jessie was? Seated by the slumbering child whilst her sister went to lie down on the sofa in the next room, Jessie had time to think over the last few bewildering hours. Anna had returned, a widow, and with a dying child, accompanied by Nelson, and evidently guarded tenderly by him; Nelson bereft of his right arm, and looking as if he had suffered much. What did it all mean? or was it a dream? Anna, too! So changed! Such a wreck of her former self! She could scarcely believe it was her beautiful sister; such sad tales had that miserable voyage, and the loss of her hair, told on her personal appearance. About midnight Jessie was aroused from her painful meditations by the wandering words of little Anna. She seemed to be either dreaming, or pursuing the train of thought begun in a dream.

"What pretty flowers! let me see the harvest-home, Mamma. Aunt Jessie, may I feed the pigeons? Where are all the rest? I want to see little brother, and Uncle Pynsent."

Jessie, perceiving that she was awake, rang the bell for her brother, and went still nearer to her. She put out her hand.

"Fairfield is very pretty; it must be like heaven?"

Here Pynsent came.

"Here is Uncle Pynsent, my love," said Jessie.

The child smiled. Pynsent felt her pulse, and looked steadfastly into her eyes.

"You had better call Anna," he said; "she is sinking. I will get her something to take, but this cannot last."

"Where is Uncle Nelson?" asked the sufferer.

"I will bring him," replied Pynsent gently.

He went into the drawing-room, where Anna was asleep on the sofa.

"Anna," he said, gently awaking her, "I am afraid your little one is worse. She has just awoke, and perhaps you had better go to her. It seems a great mercy that she should be permitted to come here, does it not, my dear sister?"

"I know—I know what you mean!" shrieked Anna; "she is dying—she cannot be saved!"

"Hush, Anna! All depends on her being kept quiet, and having no excitement."

Anna threw herself for a moment on her brother's neck.

"Oh, Pynsent, pity me! I am so wretched—so wretched! Lonely, lonely, heart-broken!"

Pynsent embraced her tenderly.

"My own Anna, my dear sister," he said lovingly, "remember you have brothers and a sister and a beautiful child still left you. For all our sakes try to compose yourself."

"Mamma, my own Mamma!" was heard through the folding doors.

Little Anna had heard her mother weep. Anna went to her, and Pynsent went downstairs, whence he returned with a soothing-draught, and accompanied by Nelson.

Jessie had been giving little Anna food, and was seated on the bed, supporting her in her arms.

Anna was kneeling on the other side.

"Uncle," said the child to Nelson, "I have got Aunt Jessie, and I shall go to heaven from Fairfield. Will you tell me about the little children and Jesus Christ?"

Nelson went to the head of the bed, opposite Jessie; and bending over the child, said slowly, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

"Mamma, may I go to Jesus Christ?" said little Anna to her mother, whose hand she held, and

who in reply could only bury her face in the bed-clothes to check her sobs.

Nelson went on gently whispering to the child of the love of Christ for His children, His tender lambs; and she, with a quiet smile, leant back on Jessie's shoulder, and fell asleep. Was it sleep or death? They could not tell. Nelson helped to support her; and thus, between Jessie and him, Anna's child went away from this world, and was borne by angels to Him who "gathereth the lambs in His arms."

CHAPTER XLI.

"How still and peaceful is the grave,
Where, life's vain tumults past,
The appointed house, by Heaven's decree,
Receives us all at last!

"The wicked there from troubling cease,
Their passions rage no more;
And there the weary pilgrim rests
From all the toils he bore."—LOGAN.

MR. MICHELSON has returned once more to the Hall. He is again pacing the large dining-room, and looks morose and unhappy. A report has reached him that his son is dead, and that his widow has arrived at Fairfield, accompanying the remains of her little child, his grandchild. The Indian mail containing the official account of the battle that Anna and Nelson had heard named so unfortunately, is not due for a week, and he must remain in a state of suspense during that period. Suspense it may scarcely be called, as the intelligence of the death of his son, as received by him, was positive: still he awaits the mail with a kind of anxious dread.

Did Mr. Michelson care for his son? It is a difficult question to answer. He certainly cared little for him when living; but now that he is dead he would give much to recall him to life. Age, as it will do, in spite of our best efforts, is creeping on Mr. Michelson. There are wrinkles around his eyes and mouth; his hair is grey, his gait less erect. Since that sudden attack in the Royal Academy, he has a less assured step; and as he walks impatiently up and down the room, a nervous halt is perceptible. Worse than all this, he is alone in the world. Ah! there is the secret of his uneasiness. Selfishness is at the root. He knows that the friends who have flattered him, the arts that he has patronized, the paintings and statues he has collected, the property he is master of, will stand him in small stead when the paralysis that is haunting him like a spectre, shall come upon him, and perhaps chain him to one spot, a helpless being for the remainder of his life. He feels a pain and tension in one sinew of his right side, that makes him stamp on the floor with impotent anger as he moves to and fro. He knows that he parted from his only son in wrath—that he never did his duty by him—that he was jealous of him, and glad of any excuse to renounce him; and now that it is too late, he wishes that he had treated him more kindly, so

as to have the remembrance, at least, of having seen him last in peace. When death has separated two people for ever, it is a miserable reflection to the survivor that their last words were uttered in anger, and that those words can neither be atoned for nor recalled. Mr. Michelson begins to think of the excellence of the Christian precept, "Love all men as brethren," and to feel that if it were acted upon in this life, there would not be so many heavy burdens of remorse to weigh down the soul in her passage to the next. He suddenly glances up, and sees that he is facing the picture of a tall, pale lady: it is the portrait of his wife. The melancholy face looks reproachfully at him, and seems to say, "You have killed me, and ruined my child." He cannot bear that mute rebuke, so he walks into the hall impatiently, and thence into the drawing-room. There have been hung, in conspicuous positions, the pictures he last purchased, 'Sedgemoor after the fight,' and 'Lear and Cordelia.' The first object he sees is the pale and sweet Cordelia bending over the kneeling father. Oh that face, which haunts him in his dreams! He turns from it, and sees the young child on the battle-field, kneeling by her dead parent. Everywhere filial tenderness! How did he ever strive to gain the affection of *his* child, so as to demand a return

of love for love? Whose love had he ever won? Yes, there was one who had loved him: where was she? Again he turns with an air of terror to the Cordelia. It seems that the second look is even more trying than the first, for he puts his hand on his forehead, and hurries out of the room. His house has become haunted; he has not been here a week, and he cannot remain.

He walks into the shrubbery, and there falls on his ear the heavy toll of the death-bell from the little church: it has been sounding sadly all the morning, at regular intervals of a minute, but he has been hitherto so wrapt in his own reflections that he has not heard it. At the end of the path in which he is now walking there is a small iron gate between the shrubbery and churchyard. He pursues his way towards it, thoughtlessly, the heavy knell sounding forth again as he reaches it. He pauses, and looks into the churchyard. The venerable church seems to reproach him for time misspent; the toll of the bell sinks into his heart like lead: yet the scene is cheerful. The bright autumn sun is drawing the few remaining dewdrops from the quiet graves, and glancing through the thick yew-trees; beyond, the wood is turning red and yellow in its change from youth to age, and the sun is sporting on its mellow face. There are

human objects of interest, also, in the graveyard: young children, seated upon the wall, and lounging on the gate, looking towards the road without, as if in expectation of something; the sexton, with a grave face, spade in hand; the clerk, suddenly emerging from the porch, reconnoitring, and again disappearing within the church. Mr. Michelson's glance follows the sexton, as he walks towards the weeping-willow that falls over the tomb of many generations of Burtons. He sees that the iron railings and the vault are both opened, and he remembers that the remains of his little grandchild have been brought to Fairfield, and are, probably, about to be interred. Suddenly there is a movement amongst the children; the clerk appears and disappears, and immediately the clergyman, in his white surplice, walks towards the churchyard-gate. Mr. Michelson feels impelled to remain, he knows not why. He buries himself amongst the shrubs, almost close to the open vault, where he can see without being seen, and, unknown to all, attends his grandchild's funeral. He almost fancies that it must be his son's, his heart beats so convulsively, and his knees tremble so much. The sound of many wheels, slow and heavy, is heard coming up the road. He cannot see the carriages, but in a few minutes he sees, above the church-

yard-wall, six bunches of nodding white plumes, surmounting the black top of a hearse. Anon the hearse disappears, and a mourning-coach replaces it, then two carriages; the rest does not come near enough to be visible to him.

"I am the resurrection and the life," strikes upon his ear, as the priest turns and walks slowly up the path to the village church. Is it a funeral or a bridal that follows him? Six young girls, dressed in white, with white silk hoods and scarfs, bearing some silken and glistening thing between them, move up the path. Surely, the grandsire's heart whispers, death never looked like that! There can be no black coffin under so white a pall! Look again, old man, and you will see. A tall lady, in the deepest of weeds, leaning on a gentleman, who can scarcely support her: that heart whispers again, the mother and her brother. Another lady and a little boy. Oh! the tell-tale heart: it recognizes for the first time a grandson in the child who walks, with a timid step, by the side of his aunt; the next sombre pair it does not know,—the artist and his young wife; then those two brothers, whose presence is a mute reproach, —men of his own age, who have followed their grandniece, his grandchild, to her early grave, whilst he is hiding, like a culprit, and watching.

Uncle Timothy leans on his brother, and both grieve, more for the living mother than for her child in heaven. Another painful throb: oh, heart, feeling at last! Captain Burford leans on the arm of his son, whom he has been allowed to welcome back from that Indian warfare, in love and honour; whilst *his* only child, fallen in the same strife, knew that his parent would shed no tears over his fate. Even the tears of the black nurse, and the grave, sorrowful air of her fellow-servant, reprove the worldly man, who was never known to weep for dead or living. The very servants and labourers that close the sad procession wear decent mourning clothes and melancholy faces; whilst he, the father and grandfather, does not mingle amongst the mourners, who are about to commit a Michelson to the tomb of the Burtons.

The little coffin, its bearers, and attendant mourners, are now in the church, where the priest is reading the solemn and beautiful Burial-service. Mr. Michelson is still rooted amongst those evergreens, as if he could not move from the spot: once or twice he makes an effort to go away, but some power, stronger than himself, restrains him. Oh! what a world of thoughts rush through his mind during the short space that elapses before

the funeral train again issues from the church! The conscience of the strong, bad man is awakened, and, like Adam in Paradise, he knows not where to flee to hide from the anger that he knows he has deserved.

Again the six white figures appear, bearing the gleaming pall; again the dark procession is formed behind. As they approach the grave, the strong heart beats more and more: the words of the man of God thrill through it. "In the midst of life we are in death: of whom may we seek for succour but of Thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased?" Why cannot the heart abase itself, and utter those words humbly?

Oh! the smothered sob that bursts from the mother, as she leans over the vault as her child is lowered into it; deeper and deeper, audible and more audible, as the falling earth echoes upon the coffin. Parted now, for ever in this world! Mr. Michelson cannot bear it; he covers his face with his hands, and they are moistened—with what? can it be a tear? God grant it! for is not a tear the first oblation of the penitent?

Every word of the concluding portion of the Service sinks into that awakened heart with power. The hope of resurrection,—the joy of those who die in the Lord,—the prayers for the conversion of

the living,—the belief in Christ the Saviour, and the concluding blessing,—all make an impression that has never before been made. He finds himself repeating the words of the priest, and joining aloud in the last "Amen," when a shriek, suppressed till now, breaks on his ear, and he sees Anna fall, insensible, into the arms of her brother. There is an immediate movement amongst the mourners, who surround the unhappy mother. Pynsent's face is ashy pale, as he motions them away, and whispers to his uncle. Mr. Michelson thinks there must be something worse than a mere fainting fit, as the clergyman and clerk look equally alarmed, and all appear to be horrified, and for the moment stunned, by the occurrence. White handkerchiefs, already saturated with tears, are presented to Pynsent, and in a few seconds Mr. Michelson sees one covered with blood, and hears the words, "It would be death to take her home."

It is the impulse of the moment; for once a heaven-inspired one, where delay or thought might be ruin;—Mr. Michelson is in the midst of the terrified group.

"Follow me, follow me! Come to my house: bring her to the Hall," he exclaims, in a manner so authoritative that not even Pynsent resists.

Impelled by the movement and action, they all follow Mr. Michelson instinctively, as he assists

Pynsent in supporting Anna, and leads the way through the shrubbery. Mr. Michelson looks upon the face of her whom he had last seen in all the brightness of youth and beauty, in the very house to which he is now bearing her. This is her second visit to her husband's natural home. Pale, bleeding, lifeless, in the weeds of widowhood, he beholds her now.

"What is it?" he asks of Pynsent in a hollow voice.

"She has burst a bloodvessel. She would attend her child's funeral, and this is the consequence of the violent outburst of long-controlled agony."

They reach the door; Mr. Michelson rings violently.

"Send the housekeeper to my room, and show the rest to the drawing-room," he says, as a servant appears.

"Upstairs, at once, I suppose?" he asks of Pynsent.

"Thank you, it will be best."

They carry their lifeless burden up the broad staircase to the corridor.

"My room is the only one ready," says Mr. Michelson.

They take her to a magnificent apartment, and lay her on the bed. Uncle Timothy, slightly aided

by Tiny and Jessie, enters after them. The housekeeper appears.

"See that everything is done, instantly, for the relief of this lady," says Mr. Michelson. "Miss Burton, you will consider this house entirely at the service of your sister and her friends," he adds, addressing Jessie, whom he recognizes now that her veil is withdrawn.

Tears gush from Jessie's eyes; she cannot speak, but she holds out her hand in token of gratitude. Mr. Michelson takes it, and for the first time there is sympathy between those two most adverse natures, thanks to the power of human kindness.

Mr. Michelson is about to leave the room, and glances once more at the bed. Whom does he see holding a handkerchief to the lips of Anna? The original of his Cordelia? The fair, sad face that has haunted him day and night? Tiny's bonnet is thrown off, and, as she leans over Anna, her attitude and expression are those of the picture. Mr. Michelson staggers out of the room, and a sudden giddiness comes over him; he holds by the bannisters, and happily recovers himself.

Half-way up the stairs stands, in uncertainty, a child; he sees Mr. Michelson, and with a bold, straightforward air advances towards him. Grandfather and grandchild face each other for the first time in their lives.

"How is my Mamma? and where is Aunt Jessie?" asks the boy quickly.

"Come here, and I will tell you," replies Mr. Michelson, opening the door of a dressing-room. Pale and exhausted, he sits down to recover himself.

"You said you would tell me how my Mamma is; and where my Aunt Jessie is," repeated the child, standing in the doorway.

"Your Mamma is very ill, and your Aunt is with her."

"Will it make Aunty sick to see Mamma bleeding so?" asked the child, turning pale.

"No, certainly not. Come here, Sir; what is your name?"

"I shan't tell you—I don't like you."

"Why do you not like me?"

"Because you don't like my Papa and Mamma, and turned them out of your house."

"Who told *you* that, Sir?" Mr. Michelson's pale face grew crimson.

"Dinah said so, and old Will: and they said I ought to have Michelson Hall some day, if I had my due." The handsome black eyes of the boy seemed to flash through the old man.

"Did any one else—did your uncles or aunts tell you the same?"

"No; but I heard Aunt Betsey tell Uncle James once, that it was a shame you did nothing for me. But I don't want any one to do for me. Aunt Jessie is my real Mamma and Papa both; Captain Burford says so—only now my other Mamma is come from India, and I love her too."

"How did you know me? When did you see me?"

"I never saw you before, but I heard them call you Mr. Michelson just now, and you are my grandfather."

"And you cannot like your grandfather?" Mr. Michelson's voice trembled; the boy perceived it, and grew less bold.

"I don't know—I don't like any one who hates my Papa and Mamma, and Aunt Jessie."

"But supposing I did not hate them?"

"Will you promise not to hurt my Mamma and Aunt Jessie, or turn them out of your house?"

"Yes; they are going to stay here until your Mamma is better."

"But my poor Papa, that they say is dead over in India—you hate him. Do you know Aunt Jessie says that the Bible tells us not to hate any one, not even our enemies?"

"But you hate me, Sir."

"No, I don't hate you; but I don't like you.

If you will try to love my Papa, I will try to love you. I should like to go and fight all those Indians, and kill them, for killing my Papa. Will you love my Papa?"

"Would to God I had loved him when he was able to return my love!"

Mr. Michelson groaned aloud, and covered his face with his hands.

The boy left his post in the doorway, and went towards him. He looked at him for a few moments, then gently touching his hands, said—

"Don't cry, please don't. If you are sorry, Aunt Jessie says—really sorry—God will forgive you. And I will love you, because you don't hate my Papa and Mamma any longer. And perhaps my Papa may come back. Colonel Burford says that it is not certain that the Indians killed him: I heard him say so. Do you know, Colonel Burford has only one arm? And he has the sleeve of his coat buttoned up, just like the picture of Lord Nelson, and it looks so funny!"

This transition, from his son's death to Colonel Burford's one arm, made Mr. Michelson smile. He looked at the boy: he was very like Chatham; the same fine, open face, and attractive manner.

"Then you will try not to hate your grandfather?"

Mr. Michelson put out his hand. The boy still hesitated.

"You did not say you would love my Papa and Mamma. You only said you wished you had loved them."

"I will try, little boy, I will try."

"Then I will try to love you."

The child put his hand into his grandfather's, who drew him towards him, put his other hand on his head, and let fall a genuine tear.

"Now I will tell you what my name is," said the child, with a sudden start; "it is Pynsent Chatham Michelson; but they call me Chatham, because it was my Papa's name."

"Will you come and live with me?"

"No, I cannot go away from Aunt Jessie; but I will come and see you, if she will let me."

The door of the room was suddenly opened, and a servant appeared.

"I beg your pardon, Sir," he said, "but we do not know whether we are to prepare luncheon; and James wants to know what horse he is to ride."

"Of course you will prepare luncheon, and let James ride the fastest horse. Are you a set of fools, that you can do nothing without directions?"

Mr. Michelson was recalled to his position as

master of the house, and, taking little Chatham by the hand, went downstairs. He saw the different carriages waiting at the door. The mourning coach had been sent away. All the house was in confusion. Servants were bustling about, and the groom was just starting for medicine. Captain Burford and Uncle James were impatiently pacing the hall, waiting for intelligence. Nelson and Charles were in the drawing-room. Captain Burford touched Uncle James, as he saw Mr. Michelson coming downstairs, leading Chatham. "Wonders will never cease," he muttered.

"This is very good of you, Michelson," said Captain Burford, as he shook Mr. Michelson's hand with all his heart. "Confound it! if it had only been under more happy circumstances, this is just as it should be. That poor girl was half dead before she started; but, hang it! she has the old spirit in her still, and she would follow her child, say what we would. Of course this brought the other women, who are all better out of the way at such a time."

"We were waiting to thank you, Mr. Michelson," said Uncle James in a trembling voice, "before we took our leave."

"Do not think of going until we hear she is better," said Mr. Michelson.

"My wife will be uneasy," said Uncle James.

"Oh! Aunt Betsey will survive it," growled the Captain; "besides, she has Mrs. Colville and Mrs. Egerton with her. I told old Will to go and tell them what had happened."

Mr. Michelson rang the door-bell.

"Put up the horses for the present," he said to the servant; and the carriages drove off.

Pynsent appeared from upstairs, looking very pale.

"Is the man gone?" he asked. "We can do nothing until the remedies come."

He came downstairs, and found himself opposite Mr. Michelson. Each had a decided natural antipathy for the other: neither knew what to say.

"I am much obliged to you," began Pynsent in measured terms, "for your kindness. I scarcely know when my sister may be able to remove with safety: she is very dangerously ill. Still, we cannot trespass—"

"I beg, Sir, you will not name the subject," interrupted Mr. Michelson majestically. "I have to thank you, also, for a favour done me when I was taken ill in the Royal Academy: perhaps you will allow me to return it in kind."

"There! there!" broke in Captain Burford.

"Let bygones be bygones; shake hands and be friends."

The worthy Captain's well-meant interference only increased the stiffness, and he walked into the drawing-room, muttering "Pshaw!" and shortly after consoling himself with his favourite aphorism, "'"Twill be all the same a hundred years hence,' I suppose."

Nelson and Charles appeared.

"How is Anna?—how is she?" they asked simultaneously.

"She is very ill. She is recovering consciousness, but the bleeding continues: we are afraid it will prove from the lungs."

"I beg, Sir," said Mr. Michelson, "that you will consider this house as the home of—of—my—my son's wife," making an effort to speak calmly. "As such, there can be no objection to her remaining."

"Thank you, Sir," said Pynsent frankly; "now I can gladly offer the right hand of fellowship, if you will allow me, and accept willingly of all your hospitality."

He waited for Mr. Michelson to make the advance, but still the right hands did not join.

"Won't you shake hands with my Uncle Pynsent?" here interrupted little Chatham; "then I

won't love you any more;" and he immediately walked over to his uncle.

Every one smiled involuntarily at the air of pride and importance assumed by the boy; still it had its effect. Mr. Michelson held out his hand, and the heads of the adverse houses of Michelson and Burton were, to all appearance, reconciled.

Pynsent returned at once to Anna. The rest, full of anxiety, went into the drawing-room. Conversation flagged: in spite of the attempt at cordiality, the ice was not thawed. It takes almost as long to melt two masses of human pride as two of the northern icebergs. Uncle James moreover was still slightly jealous; and a dreadful vision of Mr. Michelson, the enslaver, making himself agreeable to Aunt Betsey, the enslaved, came between him and friendship.

At last Mr. Michelson and Charles got into a genuine discussion on painting. They were not unfeeling, but people must talk of something when even life is at stake; and Mr. Michelson's feelings not being so deeply interested in Anna as to preclude his thinking of other matters, he introduced the subject most agreeable to himself and dearest to Charles. They had gone through much of the Art gossip of the year before Mr. Michelson ventured to introduce the point he had been aiming at from the first.

"It was strange that I should have purchased your pictures without knowing that the artist was a near neighbour until afterwards," he began.

Charles bowed.

"I confess I was first taken by the female figures in each picture. It is universally acknowledged by rivals and amateurs that your Cordelia is the finest impersonation of Shakspeare's idea ever painted."

"It is a portrait," said Charles, colouring with pleasure, "and owes whatever merit it may have to the original."

"May I ask who the original was?" asked Mr. Michelson.

"She is my wife," said Charles proudly, "and herself painted the head of King Lear."

"She must be a wonderful creature," said Mr. Michelson, feeling that here he could probe no further. "And the child?" pointing to the picture of the Battle; "I seem to recognize her. Is that also a portrait?"

"You may remember a little girl you once saw at Fairfield, and afterwards picked up on the ice in the moor, many years ago. It was taken at that period, and your memory probably recalled the face."

"And the child and woman--are they identical?"

"Yes; I used to delight in sketching Tiny when a child, and reproduced my early ideal in my first exhibited picture."

"There is some one I have seen so like that picture."

"My sister always says that Tiny is like a lady who once lived with you. I think her name was Rutherford."

"Ah! yes! perhaps so." Again that fearful pang at Mr. Michelson's heart, and the accompanying threat of paralysis.

Charles saw his countenance change.

"I fear you are not well," he said kindly; "allow me to assist you."

Mr. Michelson rose with difficulty, but the spasm passed away. The interruption changed the conversation, and Mr. Michelson proposed luncheon, to which they all adjourned, more by way of something to do than of satisfying appetites, which were truly anything but craving.

CHAPTER XLII.

"Go, let me weep! there's bliss in tears,
When he who sheds them only feels
Some lingering stain of early years
Effaced by every drop that steals.
The fruitless showers of worldly woe
Fall dark to earth, and never rise;
While tears that from repentance flow
In bright exhalement reach the skies."—MOORE.

IT is now time to take a look at Anna. The climax of her fate seems to have arrived, and a very slender thread holds the frail fabric of her life together; she has recovered consciousness, but is too weak to speak: her face is so pale, and her features are so suddenly contracted, that you would not know her. If she opens her eyes, it is to glance round her inquiringly, as if to ask where she is, and what has happened. Jessie tells her gently that she must be quiet, and that she is with friends, and she closes again the large black eyes. Uncle Timothy sits motionless by her side, his hand on her pulse, and his face expressive of deep anxiety and alarm. Pynsent prepares and administers the

remedies he and his uncle have agreed upon; and poor Tiny sits at the head of the bed, to be useful when she can, and to pray that her dear sister may be spared. The bleeding has stopped for awhile, and a dead stillness is in the room. The beautiful Anna,—the admired, the flattered, the vain, the proud,—is indeed brought low. A few short weeks ago she was praying that her own dear child might be given to her from the brink of the grave, and weeping for her husband; now they are praying and weeping for her. What will be the result of this effusion of her life's blood, God only knows; but there is nothing so dreadful to witness, in all the dreadful diseases to which human nature is subject, as this slow flowing and ebbing forth, so to say, of life itself. Jessie has seen much of illness, in every form, but this appears to her the worst of all that she has ever witnessed. Great as is her self-command, she can scarcely prevent the tears and sobs from bursting forth.

But we will not linger over the horrors of such a sight. Before night the bleeding had ceased—at least the alarming part of it—and it only remained to discover whence it proceeded, and what was the amount of danger. The pulse was becoming rather more regular, and the face less death-like: there was no longer cause for immedi-

ate alarm : she was not dying. This was all that either uncle or nephew could venture to say to the anxious friends who were awaiting their fiat.

It was necessary to come to some decision as to who should remain at the Hall, and who should leave. Pynsent resolved upon sitting up the whole night to watch the symptoms. He was to have returned to London the following day, but he could not desert his sister in her hour of trouble. Anna found the rough, sarcastic brother, whom she had rather feared than loved, the tenderest of friends when she was in real distress. It is at such a time that we always know our true friends, and find out the soft parts of their natures. Uncle Timothy could not be persuaded to leave Anna; he went himself to Mr. Michelson, and, apologizing for the trouble he should give, said—

"My nephew will, I hope, be able to go back to his own duties in London in the course of a day or two, if no violent return of the complaint take place tonight. I shall then wish, if you have no objection, to be with Anna entirely, as she will require the most constant care and watching. I feel how much we are intruding, but if we can save her—"

"Yes, save her, for God's sake!" said Mr. Michelson, looking with some feeling at the old

man, half blind, who was willing to sacrifice all his own comforts for his niece: "this house is at your service; I may go away in a day or two, and then it will be wholly free."

Behind Uncle Timothy stood Tiny, who had led him down the strange staircase to Mr. Michelson. His sight was better, but he was still fearful of places that he did not know well. It was singular that, do what he would to prevent it, a sensation of suffering came over Mr. Michelson as he saw Tiny,—a desire to speak to her, but a want of power to find words to address her. He bent to her politely, as to a stranger, and she returned the inclination.

"I should like to see Jessie before we leave," said Captain Burford to Uncle Timothy; "of course she will be head nurse, she always is, God bless her! And you, Tiny?"

"Pynsent and Jessie think I had better go home," said Tiny timidly. "Jessie says the housekeeper is so kind that she shall want no help; and we are so many—"

"I hope you will stay if you wish it," said Mr. Michelson, looking at Tiny, and suddenly meeting her eyes. Oh! the expression of those eyes, and the pang at his heart!

"May I come again, then?" asked Tiny, eagerly.

"As you like—when you like," said Mr. Michelson, turning away.

They thought he was annoyed by the fuss and bustle, and Charles gently took Tiny aside, and said she had better return now, at all events.

She led Uncle Timothy upstairs again, and after opening the door for them, Mr. Michelson went into the hall, and watched her as she ascended the staircase, guiding the steps of her kind guardian and protector. Again the pang shot through his heart.

Jessie came down immediately.

"Jessie, my dear, Nelson says that he has not seen you once since you all came back together to Fairfield."

"No, Captain Burford, Nelson has not been to Fairfield."

"He did not like to come at such a time, my dear. Ah! Jessie, he is all that a father could wish."

Jessie blushed, knowing the good Captain's weak point, even at such a time.

"Did you want me?" she asked.

Here Nelson came into the room with little Chatham, who had been entertaining him with various family histories. He held out his hand to Jessie, with the old, old smile, that she had not seen for so many years.

"How is Anna?" he asked.

"Very ill, but Pynsent hopes, better. It is a dreadful catastrophe. It seems as if there were to be no end to her troubles."

"Jessie, you must not be too anxious. You must not injure your own health by over-watching and nursing. What should we all do if you were ill?"

This was said very naturally, and literally meant nothing more than the mere words might convey; still there was the manner and voice of years ago, that spoke more directly to Jessie's heart, than any words could have done. She knew that Nelson was no hypocrite, though rarely betrayed into any display of feeling; and she was at once convinced that some change in himself had restored them to their old footing. She had thought so in London, during the few and brief conversations they had on matters not directly concerning themselves: and she had also seen that Anna was no longer what she had once been to him. A feeling of happiness shot through the overpowering anguish she was suffering on her sister's account—happiness at believing that the friend of her childhood had recovered his old friendship for her—nothing more: she had given up all other hopes long ago. She looked at him with those truthful eyes that he

knew so well, and received another kind, old-fashioned smile in return. They understood one another: all was as it used to be.

Captain Burford was watching them, and he suddenly began to rub his hands with an alacrity that startled everybody, and that he felt to be very improper under the circumstances. Jessie turned to say a few words to Uncle James, and was going upstairs, when little Chatham came forward with,

"Well, Aunty, may I stay with you?"

"No, dear; you must go home with Aunt Tiny, and take care of the farm."

He knew it was useless to resist, so he crept round to Mr. Michelson, who at once took his hand, and said, with more natural feeling than he had yet displayed, "This little fellow must be my companion and my property, *now*, if you will allow him."

There was an emphasis on the "now" that everybody understood. It was as much as to say, 'Now that his son was gone, and he could not make reparation where it was due.'

"You are not angry, Aunty? Oh, I will go home directly," cried the child, throwing his arms round Jessie, whose tears were flowing fast.

"No, no, love. Stay, and be good to this gentleman."

She took him by the hand, and led him to his grandfather.

"I thank God, Sir, that you see the right. May he be a blessing to you, and gain and deserve your love!"

She stooped to kiss the child, and as she smiled through her tears, such a radiance was in her eyes, as had never shone there before.

"You are a wonderful young woman," said Mr. Michelson involuntarily, as Jessie hurried away.

"You are right! you are right," exclaimed Captain Burford, seizing his hand, and shaking it ecstatically. "Brothers, sister, and uncles have had reason to bless the light of her sweet face for many years, and now a new generation has to do the same. Don't you love your Aunt, Chatham?"

"Dearly, dearly: best of all!" cried the boy.

"And God knows, so do I," said the good Captain.

If any film still covered Nelson's eyes, it fell off now, and never gathered again.

The carriages came round, and Mr. Michelson watched Captain Burford and Nelson drive off in one, and saw Uncle James, Charles, and Tiny into the other. Tiny had always felt kindly disposed to Mr. Michelson, since her childhood. He had been good to her once, and she had never forgotten

it. She put out her hand timidly, and the proud man took it, and looked into her eyes,—not the bold, unpleasant look, that Jessie and Anna had always disliked, but one of anxious curiosity. And again the pang shot through his heart, and he turned hastily away.

He was thankful to be alone; thankful that all the unusual excitement was over. He shut himself into his library, forgetful of little Chatham, and of all external things. Again a tide of remorse swept over him. The very sight of that family love, which he had just witnessed, added to his pain. He had no one to love or care for him, and he deserved to be hated and despised. He had never thought of any one but self during his long life, and now he had only self to care for self. On the contrary, a simple country girl, who had all her life forgotten self in her desire to do her duty to others, was blessed with the love and respect of all who knew her. He began to wish that the impulse of nature had not been so strong within him at the funeral, as to have induced him to ask them all to his house. He could not but continue to hate people who were a perpetual reproach to him —who had loved his son—brought up his grandson—lived respectably on the tithe of a fortune that he had squandered on trifles; and, finally,

gladly accepted such advances as he had made towards a reconciliation. And through every reflection, every thought, came that beautiful young wife—the artist-genius, whom under other circumstances he would have courted and flattered, but at whom he now dared scarcely look, she was so like one whom he had wronged.

His reflections were interrupted by a knock at the door. His hasty interjection, nearly approaching to an oath, sank into a growling "Who's there?"

"It's me, Grandpapa. May I come in? I don't like being alone in this great house."

Mr. Michelson admitted his little grandson with as much readiness as he could assume.

"If I may have a book," said the child, looking round the well-filled library, "I won't talk, and then I shan't trouble you; but it was so lonely in that big room in the dark, with those pictures looking at me; I thought they were making faces, and I got frightened."

"No," said Mr. Michelson, rousing himself; "you must talk to me. There is a little stool; bring it to the fire, and tell me all about your life at Fairfield."

The boy was soon deep in the histories of great-uncles and aunts, horses, cows, pigeons, and poul-

try. Insensibly his grandfather forgot himself in this new interest, and found himself really listening to the descriptions of country life and manners as exhibited at Fairfield. He began to wonder whether he could ever bring himself to live in one place, and to make occupation and amusement out of surrounding objects; and by degrees his mood softened, and he felt, he knew not how, a better man.

By-and-by the housekeeper came with a message from Miss Burton, to say that, if Mr. Michelson had no objection, Master Chatham had better have his supper and go to bed.

"Bring it here, then," said Mr. Michelson.

"May I sleep with you, Grandpapa? I don't like to be quite alone in this big house."

"I hope you are not a coward, Sir?"

"I am a soldier's son!" said the boy, drawing himself up, "and I could fight any one in the day; but I never was anywhere but at Fairfield before."

"Have the dressing-room made ready for this young gentleman, next to the east room prepared for me," said Mr. Michelson, as the housekeeper was leaving the room.

It was something for a man who had not eaten with an appetite for months to watch the boy eat his supper of bread-and-milk. When it was con-

cluded, he got down, and very solemnly thanked God for his meal. Then he asked if he might go to his aunt; and when informed that she must not be taken from his mamma, he said, "Then may I say my prayers to you? I sometimes say them to Uncle Timothy, when Aunty is very, very busy."

Mr. Michelson neither said yes nor no, but as he saw Chatham pause for an answer, he made a slight movement, which was taken for consent, and the boy knelt down at his grandfather's knees There was nothing remarkable in this. He had been accustomed to repeat his morning and evening prayers to his aunt, and he knew that it was right to do so; therefore he proposed to make his grandfather the hearer on the present occasion. But the action was not without its effect on Mr. Michelson. As he looked down on the curly, black head of the boy, he remembered a time when he had suddenly entered that same room years ago, and seen his son kneeling at his mother's feet,—when he, too, was a child and greatly resembled the one before him. He remembered how his pale, patient wife had started when he thus surprised her, and had flushed with sudden colour when he, by some, to him, unnatural impulse, had kissed her, and put his hand on his child's head. Why did all these long-banished memories crowd upon him

at this time? He could not tell; but they came uncalled, and would not be dismissed.

When Chatham had ended his simple prayers, his grandfather put his arm round him and kissed him. The child looked pleased, and said, "You love me now, Grandpapa. I shall tell old Will, and Dinah, and Aunt Betsey, that you are very good and kind, and that you are to have the Hall always."

"Can you tell me, little Chatham, who that lady was before she married your Uncle Charles, whom they call Tiny?"

"No; but I don't think she has any papa or mamma, any more than Aunt Jessie."

"Did you never hear them talk about her at Fairfield?"

"I heard Dinah say to Molly, the dairymaid, that nobody knew who she was, and that she was not half good enough for Uncle Charles. But indeed she is very good; and don't you think she is very pretty?"

"Did they like your Uncle Charles to marry her?"

"Aunt Betsey did not. I heard her scold Aunt Jessie about it once; but Aunty sent me out of the room. Do you know, Aunt Betsey is very proud: Dinah says so; and I don't like her very much."

The housekeeper came to take Master Chatham to bed, and thus ended the queries concerning Tiny, from the answers to which Mr. Michelson did not gain much satisfaction. He however sat long that night pondering over the events of the day; but what conclusions he came to it would be difficult to say, since he went to bed in a most unsettled state of mind,—a mind softened, it is true, but not purified from the immense amount of worldliness and selfishness it contained.

Meanwhile the night passed wearily and anxiously to the watchers upstairs. In due course of time Uncle Timothy was prevailed upon to go to bed, and Pynsent and Jessie were left alone with their exhausted sister. The housekeeper had been most attentive, and had offered to sit up or do anything in her power to relieve Jessie, who however declined further services, with many thanks. It was a long time since Pynsent and Jessie had met, and now their meeting was most painful. Death and sickness had brought them together, and they had neither time nor inclination to talk over the many little events and affairs, too minute for a letter, that each had to communicate to the other.

Anna had looked weak and ill that morning, when she followed her child to the grave; but what was her weakness then to what it is now? It

is not necessary to tell her to be quiet: her strength is so prostrated that she cannot move. She lies with one arm outside the bed, and the hand looks as white as the sheet on which it rests; whilst her face is perfectly colourless. She seems either to dream or doze, as her eyes are closed; but she does not attempt to speak. She is evidently too weak to make any effort, mentally or bodily. They administer either nourishment or medicine every quarter of an hour, and she swallows it unconsciously. Pynsent has taken his place by that death-like hand, where his uncle sat so long, and feels the pulse frequently. His skill alone would make him conscious of a pulse: that sign of continuing life would not appear to an uninitiated touch; but Pynsent thanks God and takes courage, for its faint throb is just perceptible to him.

Thus wanes the night. Jessie, moving to and fro by the faint light of a lamp, looks like a spectre. Now and then she pauses by the side of Pynsent, and whispers the oft-repeated question, "Is it stronger?"—to which Pynsent can only reply by a melancholy shake of the head; then Jessie sits down in the large armchair, and prays silently.

At last the first faint rays of the autumn sun pierce the window-curtains, and with them creeps in the housekeeper, followed shortly after by Uncle

Timothy. About the same moment the faint distant sound of a bell is heard. Slight as it is, they fear lest it should startle Anna. She uncloses her eyes, but quickly falls back again into unconsciousness.

"She is better," whispers Uncle Timothy. "The pulse is a shade stronger."

"Now, Ma'am," says the housekeeper to Jessie, "you must lie down for an hour or two."

"Yes," says Pynsent, "you will want all your strength, and you must not exhaust it at the beginning."

Jessie yielded, and, as she was leaving the room, was met by Mr. Michelson's valet, with his master's inquiries for Mrs. Michelson. She said she hoped she was a little better. The housekeeper conducted her to a bedroom, and she lay down. Exhausted by a week of harass and wretchedness, she soon slept, but awoke in a few hours, to return again to her post, refreshed, and prepared for another day and night of watching.

Three or four such days and nights gradually gave Anna some degree of strength, and enabled her doctors to say that there was no present danger of any return of the bleeding from the lungs; for they had by this time too surely discovered from whence it came. The fear was now that

this dangerous attack, preceded as it had been by months of excitement and fatigue, might terminate in consumption. She still continued too weak to talk, but recognized and smiled upon those about her, as if she was conscious of her situation. It was sad to witness the gradual return of memory, with some small portion of physical power. It was visible in the melancholy expression of her eyes, and the quiet tears that constantly flowed down her cheeks, and that no one tried to repress.

Could we look into the bewildered mind, it would be sadder still. First came the questions "Where am I? What am I?" put to self, much as an infant, if he have reasoning powers, must put it, when he first opens his eyes upon the light. Then flocked in odd dreamy recollections of childhood, and the woman, Anna, was again playing amid the fields and gardens of Fairfield. Anon confused memories of brothers, sisters, friends, and companions, floated about, indistinct, but real. It was long before she advanced to more mature years, and dreams of Indian days rushed through her mind. But here, too, were children: those two beloved ones that she had left behind her in their foreign graves lived again, and, together with her husband, played before her.

Dancing in, came that last and dearest, the little Anna, so spiritual and shadowy that she could not clasp her. Mingling with each and all, glided in Nelson, grave, and with that strange hanging sleeve; and Jessie, looking so calm and sweet, with those few slight threads of silver hair that the young ones seemed to try to pluck out: and so, for hours, and even days, these dear ones intertwined and succeeded each other like phantoms in her mazy mind. Suddenly she is on the sea, buffeted about by the waves, and now a presage of the reality dawns upon her: the dying child—the slaughtered husband—the funeral—the past—the present—slowly unfold before her, and therefore those quiet tears, those heavy sighs.

"So best," whispers Uncle Timothy; "it is natural, and whatever is true to nature is right."

The first words she spoke were to Jessie. They were alone for a few minutes together, and their hands tenderly clasped.

"Am I dying, Jessie?" she gasped. "Tell me truly."

"Thank God, dearest, you are better; but very ill," was the reply.

"Pray for my soul," she said, and closed her eyes.

Again, some time afterwards—

"My child—my Anna—where is she?"

"She is very happy, love. Be quiet, for all our sakes."

"I know: she is in heaven. If I were with her—" The tears flowed on.

Again, at another time—

"Where am I? Is this Plas Ayron? Am I in a dream? or what is this strange room?"

"You are among friends, dearest: do not ask more. It is essential that you should be quiet."

Again—

"I have been very wicked, Jessie: wilful and vain, and altogether sinful. Will God forgive me?"

"All, for Christ's sake, dearest love. Pray through Him, and we will pray with you."

"For Christ's sake," she murmured, and closed her eyes.

Again—

"Do you think my husband is in heaven? He was very good, and kind; but—"

"God is merciful, Anna: let us hope. Perhaps he is not dead."

"Ah no! he died to punish me."

"Hush! do not say such things: try to be calm, and sleep, and put your trust in God."

"For Christ's sake," she murmured once more.

And thus days wore on, with very slight and

slow amendment. At the end of a week, however, she was decidedly stronger, and able to be moved in a sheet from one bed to another, whilst her bed was made. When this fatiguing operation was performed, and she was lying apparently quiet and comfortable, she addressed Pynsent, who was by her side.

"Pynsent, I have not deserved so much from you."

"Nonsense, Anna dear: are we not brother and sister?"

"Have you forgiven me—quite—quite—what I did to Nelson?"

"Long ago; so do not let us think of it again. All was, doubtless, for the best."

"And my many sins against yourself? Oh, you are so kind!"

"Anna, understand that I love you with a brother's love; and do not excite yourself by these fears."

"Then, Pynsent, you must prove your love by going back to London. I heard Uncle Timothy urge it: I know it is right. You will lose your profession. I cannot talk. Promise me."

Pynsent promised, and kissed his sister as he did so!

"Pynsent, God bless you! Think of me kindly.

Thank you for all you did to my little Chatham long ago."

"Now, Anna dear, you must not exert yourself: remember, I am your doctor, and you must obey."

And for once Anna did obey her brother, and slept.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"Though the day of my destiny's over,
And the star of my fate hath declined,
Thy soft heart refused to discover
The faults which so many could find;
Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,
It shrank not to share it with me,
And the love which my spirit hath painted
It never hath found but in *thee*."—BYRON.

THE following day, Pynsent, at the request and by the advice of all parties, returned to London. A profession so difficult to gain and keep, was not to be lost, and his patients were constantly sending for him; so, as there was no immediate danger in Anna's case, and as his uncle was with her, he sacrificed feeling to imperative duty and necessity. He naturally expressed himself much obliged to Mr. Michelson for his kindness to them all; but he did not thank him on Anna's account, because he considered that she had a right to all that was done for her. He was glad to find him more friendly in his demeanour, and came down from his own height accordingly. Little Chatham seemed

quite at home with his grandfather, who, during the past week, had kept him constantly with him. Fear had acted as powerfully on Mr. Michelson's mind as a sense of right; more so, perhaps. He was under a constant dread of paralysis, or sudden death; and he had an indistinct notion that one way of making his peace with God was by making peace with those he had injured.

"Little boy, will you go into the library?" he said to Chatham. He somehow disliked calling him Chatham—it reminded him of his own son.

"Mr. Burton, I once heard you suggest to my physician that you thought my attack paralysis. I did not know you then, but I often have wished to consult you, as I think—I fear—in short, there may be a return."

Mr. Michelson's hand trembled. Pynsent saw the fear, and at once inquired into symptoms, and prescribed. He found the nervous system much shaken, and, although he did not say so, agreed with the patient. Country air; amusement without excitement; exercise, and certain medicines, were Pynsent's remedies; which proved different from those of the physician in town.

"You will find my uncle a most able adviser if you will condescend to consult him; and anything I can do by letter I shall be most happy to do."

Pynsent had a capital horse from Mr. Michelson, and he thought he might just give himself time to take a peep at his friends before he started.

Seated in the large, old-fashioned parlour, in great state, were Aunt Betsey and Mrs. Colville; —the latter reclining on a sofa with a newspaper in her hand; the former, as usual, knitting those everlasting articles for which Pynsent could never find names. Mrs. Colville was rejoiced to see her doctor, but, truth to tell, she was so much better, and had been so well treated by Uncle Timothy, that even she acknowledged herself nearly convalescent. Aunt Betsey and she suited admirably, and took to one another from the first, because each alike prided herself on her family. It was fortunate for the Burtons' reputation for antiquity, and for Pynsent's in particular, that they had an Aunt Betsey. Mrs. Colville would have looked upon them with eyes of suspicion, as nobodies, but for her. She now regarded them as people of family, and consequently equal to any one.

"There is nothing like blood, in my opinion," she would say to Aunt Betsey.

"Nor in mine, Ma'am," would be the reply. "It is singular that my nephews and nieces think nothing of it."

"Well, Pynsent," said Aunt Betsey after the

first embrace—they had not met before—" this is a pretty concatenation of events. Only imagine my poor dear Anna's being taken to the Hall! I really would rather have followed her to her grave."

" My dear Aunt, it is a most fortunate concatenation, as it is likely to give little Chatham his rights, so pray do not trouble about that. If we can only save Anna, all will be well, I hope. But I am just come to say good-bye. Where is my uncle?"

" He has just driven Mrs. Egerton over to Fairfield. She is gone to stay a few days with Tiny, and to help to keep house. I am sure she is most kind."

" Louisa declares that she will take care of the farm," said Mrs. Colville. " I hope she will not take cold. I really do not know what I should do if she were ill."

Pynsent felt Mrs. Colville's pulse, and declared her wonderfully better; told Aunt Betsey that she looked as young as ever, and was soon on his way to Fairfield.

Here the first eager cry from all was, " How is Anna?" even before Louisa had shaken hands with Pynsent, although she had not seen him since they parted at the Paddington station. Uncle James

could not resist giving Pynsent one of his old thumps on the back, and exclaiming—

"Do you remember the old games of chess? Miss Louisa used to puzzle you then, you rascal! I dare say she will puzzle you more now."

"I dare say she will, Uncle; all ladies are enigmas."

"Not so much as gentlemen," said Louisa. "I told your uncle about the wig."

Here Tiny came in, with something very nearly like a colour on her cheeks. She had been ordering luncheon for Pynsent.

"Tiny," said Pynsent, "I believe Jessie must come over here next week for a day or two; will you have any objection to take her place with Anna and Uncle Timothy during her stay? You need not be afraid of Mr. Michelson, as he is really very considerate in not interfering with Anna. It has been a strange chain of circumstances."

"Tiny is quite brave now with strangers," said Louisa; "she entertained a whole party last week, who called to inquire for Anna."

"Nelson expects the Indian news today," said Charles, "and we shall probably be satisfied as to the truth of the report concerning Chatham. What must be said to Anna?"

"If it is true, she had better know it at once.

as she fully believes it. If untrue, joy, in this case, might be worse than sorrow; so it must be carefully broken to her by degrees. The excitement of hearing suddenly that he still lives, might bring on a relapse. I am going to Captain Burford's, and if the mail has arrived, I will beg Nelson to ride over to the Hall and see Jessie. Anna has already been asking about it."

Pynsent and Louisa shook hands very warmly when they parted, and as he rode toward the town, he, for awhile, forgot Anna and the other family anxieties in thinking of the bright eyes of the young widow, and wondering whether his promise of remaining a bachelor for Jessie's sake was binding.

He found the Captain and Nelson in a state of great excitement, and about to start for Fairfield.

"All's right! all's well, thank God!" exclaimed the former, grasping Pynsent's hand. "It was a false alarm; 'Major Michelson slightly wounded' is the report, and his regiment not so much cut up as was originally supposed."

"Poor Anna!" said Pynsent; "this will be either life or death to her."

"Life," said the Captain, "depend upon it. I don't believe that joy ever kills, though sorrow may. I dare say there is a letter for her in the post-office at this moment."

They all walked to the office at once, and found, as they expected, a letter from Major Michelson to his wife, feebly directed, but still in his handwriting. It is needless to say how thankful they were.

It was settled that Nelson should ride to the Hall with the news, whilst Captain Burford went to Fairfield. They saw Pynsent off, and started soon after. They had time for the following conversation first.

"I vow, Nelson, you look in better spirits than I have seen you since your return."

"Is there not reason for it, my dear Father? Major Michelson alive, and, we hope, his wife better, and likely to be better,—to say nothing of good accounts from India."

"But, Nelson—excuse me—but I really thought your coming home with Anna, you know, and fancying her a widow,—now don't be angry,—but I fancied—zounds! it will out—I thought the old feelings would come back, and you would be thinking of marrying her."

"My dear Father, how little you know me! how little indeed most relations and friends know one another! Nothing would ever have induced me to marry her, after what I knew of her feelings and character. When my eyes were once fairly

opened, there was little fear of their closing again."

"My dear boy, it makes me young again to hear you say so. I was afraid that you had never got over that affair; I have never been comfortable about you from that hour to this."

"Then I ought to be ashamed of myself for leaving you one moment in doubt, as I am, and always have been, for my conduct to you on that occasion. I find that nine or ten years make a great change in one's feelings and notions; and mine have undergone a serious one."

"By Jove! the only change you wanted was to turn from that minx, Anna, to—"

"Father, you may be assured that I met Anna Michelson on the deck of the vessel as I would have met a sister, and that her sorrow at the loss of her husband caused me unmitigated pain for her, but no renewal of hope for myself. I am thankful to be able to say, that during the whole voyage I was enabled to act as a friend by her, without feeling either hope or desire of becoming anything more to her."

"Hurrah! bravo! that's what I call a man! Now for my dear Jessie: '*revenons à nos moutons!*' By the bye, Jessie is studying French and Italian diligently."

"Again, my dear Father, we must come to an understanding upon this head. I know what your good intentions have been for me, and I fully appreciate them. I also know that there is not in the whole world a more excellent person than Jessie; but you must see we can never be anything to one another but friends."

"But what? Zounds, Sir, but you must—you shall! Do you mean to say that you have found some new Anna—some fresh piece of beauty and fascination? and be hanged to them—"

"Now you must not run off in that way. I have no new piece of beauty or fascination."

"Then who in the world, Sir, do you mean to marry?"

"I do not mean to marry at all."

"Not marry! you an old bachelor! disabled too! Why, you want a right arm more than any man I know."

"That is the very reason I shall never get one. I could not for one moment suppose that, maimed and middle-aged, any girl would think of me."

"The dickens is in it if a hundred girls wouldn't think of you, if only to marry a Colonel. But my Jessie has thought of you all her life,—little as you have deserved it,—and would, if you behaved decently, have you now, perhaps."

"My dear Father, after what passed between me and Anna, I could no more venture to ask Jessie to marry me than I could the Queen. A pretty compliment to a woman, after being jilted by her own sister! Oh no! I honour Jessie too highly to insult her. Gladly would I prove to her how much I honour and love her,—yes, love her,—but not by offering her a suitor rejected by her sister, and a disabled, useless soldier to boot; so do not annoy her by talking of such things."

"Hurrah! all's right. I begin to know you, Nelson. 'None but the brave deserve the fair,' and you are brave and modest too, by Jove you are! There, take the letter, and ask to see Jessie. I shall have my way in my old-age, after all. You must make haste, though. Be sure to marry before you are forty, because then you can both say you are thirty. I don't think Jessie looks a day more, but as for you, you look fifty at least."

"Not very flattering to a man you wish to make agreeable to a lady of thirty. But how can I ask for Jessie?"

"With your tongue, I suppose. Isn't she the best person to give her sister's letter to? Women know more of these things than men."

"But I must see Mr. Michelson first; remember, Chatham is his son."

"Hang Michelson! he hasn't one grain of genuine feeling in his nature. But perhaps you are right. There's old Jess at the door. Don't start so; 'tis the mare. Now go your way, and don't ride as if you had both your arms to steer with. There, good bye."

"I declare he is incurable. Every one has his monomania, and this has been my father's all his life. It must be annoying to Jessie; but she is so good, she takes everything like an angel. How was I ever so blind as to see anything suitable to me in Anna, or to overlook for a moment all that is so lovely in Jessie? At this moment I think she is the prettiest of the two. No mere beauty of feature could equal the sunshine of her eyes and the sweetness of her smile."

As the reader will suppose, this latter speech was not uttered in the presence of Captain Burford, but was rather a soliloquy made *en route* for the Hall. During the whole ride Nelson was in a perpetual state of soliloquy of the same kind, and perhaps Jessie might not have objected to become the recipient of the same.

Arrived at the Hall, Nelson inquired for Mr. Michelson. He was out with little Chatham. Miss Burton was naturally the next person to ask for, and in due course of time she appeared.

"I bring you good news, Jessie," were Nelson's first words; "I hope Anna will be well enough to bear it."

"Thank God, then," said Jessie, much agitated, "Chatham is not dead."

"Only slightly wounded. And I have a letter for Anna."

"Oh, my dear, dear sister!" was all that Jessie could say as she sat down, more overpowered by the sudden joy than she had been by her late sorrows. She burst into tears, and they relieved her. "I am so thankful; I cannot help it. It is so ridiculous to cry for joy; but I am so very, very thankful."

"We are all so thankful, Jessie. Perhaps it will save her. It will put happiness into all our hearts once more."

Jessie suddenly looked up, and caught Nelson's eyes fixed on her with the kind, old expression, and saw, as he said, joy in his face. She, too, had been possessed with the Captain's suspicions concerning Nelson. She had tried to repress them, as very worldly and wrong; but to see Anna a widow, and Nelson her protector during a long voyage, to note his devoted attention to her, and his grief for her child, had been to recall the ancient attachment, and to make visions for the

future. Now those visions were swept away, and yet Nelson looked supremely happy. There was nothing forced in his manner or expression: Jessie knew them both well, and that when he was vexed or pained, the grave, stern mouth was the index. Now he smiled as she loved to see him smile.

There was a look of surprise, or inquiry, or something peculiar, in Jessie's truthful eyes, as she glanced at Nelson, which he seemed to understand.

"*Et tu, Brute?* and you too, Jessie?" he said, as if in reply to her thought. "You are mistaken; *that* could never have been, and neither she nor I would ever have wished it."

Jessie blushed crimson, as if taken in a crime, and cast down her eyes. They were both silent. Jessie recovered herself, and said—

"I must go to Anna. I am sure you will excuse me. I must consult with my uncle as to the best means of breaking this to her."

Jessie had not been alone with Nelson for many years; he had avoided such interviews formerly, and now it was embarrassing to her. They both knew what had been originally intended, and that in young days they had themselves wished the same.

"One more word, Jessie, now I have the opportunity," said Nelson. "Shall you and I go back

twenty years of our existence, and start from the time when I first went to India?"

Jessie could not answer, she was so taken by surprise.

"Can you look upon me as the old and early friend, who has actually returned, in mind at least, to that time, in spite of this lopped limb and these grey hairs?"

"I have never looked upon you in any other light," said Jessie; "I have never changed."

The words were scarcely uttered when Jessie wished them recalled. What construction might not Nelson put upon the "I have never changed"? so rashly expressed. If he knew how dearly she had loved him all her life, what must he think of the confession she had made? How bold and forward he must think her!

But Nelson only looked happy and grateful; he was not a vain man, and could not suppose that she had ever thought of him decidedly in any light but that of a friend.

"Then we are friends for life, Jessie; once more brother and sister, in all but blood," said Nelson.

Again the bright tears of joy gleamed in Jessie's eyes as she looked frankly at Nelson, and put out her hand. Nelson took it, and as he glanced at his own left hand, said gaily—

"It is nearest the heart, as the saying is, although it has not yet learnt the friendly shake of its departed brother. God bless you, Jessie! But I am detaining you, and you must be wanted. Give my love to Anna; and if you venture to tell her, say I rejoice with all my heart."

Jessie had not felt for many, many years the great big throb of happiness that suddenly beat in her every pulse. Chatham living, and Nelson what he used to be to her! In the excess of her joy she felt that Anna too must live to share and complete it. She did not dare to go to Anna with that face of delight and those tears. She went to her room to compose herself, and to thank God for His mercies. There she found little Chatham, searching for a book he had left there.

"What is the matter, Aunty? You have been crying; but you look so gay. Ah! I know: my papa is alive. Hurrah! my papa is alive. I will go and tell grandpapa;" and without waiting for a word, the child ran off. Jessie called to him, and tried to stop him in vain, so she thought she had better follow him; but he was out-of-doors, and far down the drive, before she had reached the bottom of the stairs.

Jessie has truly a tell-tale face. She thinks it is calm and composed when she enters Anna's room.

Uncle Timothy is quietly repeating a psalm which he knows by heart to Anna, but Anna looks up suddenly. No sooner has she seen Jessie's eyes than her own emit a wonderful light, and a flush overspreads her face.

"He is alive!" she exclaims, "I see it;" and she suddenly rises in her bed, but falls back again from weakness. She puts her thin hand over her eyes, and all that Jessie can discover, as she leans anxiously over her, is a nervous twitching of the mouth and trembling of the hand. Jessie prepares a composing draught, whilst Uncle Timothy watches the effect of this sudden emotion, the cause of which is unknown to him, with great anxiety. At last a low sob is heard, and tears steal through the fingers, and down the cheeks. They dare not speak to her for a long time; but Jessie becomes so alarmed that she just murmurs, "Anna, dear Anna!" as she kisses the forehead and hand of her sister.

"Yes, I can bear it; only leave me now," murmurs Anna.

Jessie draws the curtains round the bed, and having whispered the good news to Uncle Timothy, sits down.

It seems a long time to wait in such great uncertainty, but still the gentle sob is heard occa-

sionally, and Jessie prays that all may be well. At last she hears a faint "Jessie!" from the bed, and undraws the curtain. Again Anna looks at her.

"Say—say—" she exclaims.

"It is true, dearest: he lives," says Jessie.

"I knew it—I saw it in your face. I have known the day that the letters ought to come, from the first: and I have waited, and counted the days and hours, ever since we came to England. Although I believed he was dead, I have ventured to hope a little since my illness: and now there is something to live for."

Jessie could say, "There is always something to live for, if we strive to do our duty," but she refrains.

"And now, kiss me, Jessie, and thank God for me. You will do it better than I, and He will hear you better: and I will learn to be grateful, as I ought." Again the quiet tears flow down Anna's pale face, as she turns away, and hides herself and her deep feelings even from her sister.

Jessie begins to think of Mr. Michelson, but finds that Uncle Timothy has already gone, she doubts not, in search of him. Uncle Timothy returns however, and says that he has just met little Chatham, who is asking for Jessie most anxiously. Jessie goes out, and is accosted by Chatham.

"Oh! Aunty, will you come to Grandpapa? I am afraid I have hurt him. I did not like to tell Uncle Timothy."

Jessie followed Chatham to the library, where she found Mr. Michelson, looking very pale, and apparently in pain. He articulated with difficulty—

"Is—it—true? Is—my son—"

"Yes, Sir; he is alive, thank God, and only slightly wounded. But you are ill?"

"Ah! yes—my side—my head!"

Jessie rang the bell, told the man to send the housekeeper, and then went upstairs for her uncle. She rang for a housemaid, who had been very kind in helping to wait upon Anna, and begged her to remain with her sister, whilst she went with her uncle to Mr. Michelson.

They found him endeavouring to explain to the housekeeper that he had been a little giddy, but was better. He did not choose that any one but his medical man should suppose it possible that he —the grand and gay—could be threatened with loss of speech and motion. When Uncle Timothy appeared, he waved the housekeeper from him, who went out, followed by Jessie and little Chatham.

The clever doctor soon found what was the matter; and although he did not consider the present

attack alarming, he, like Pynsent, thought it might be the precursor of paralysis. As Mr. Michelson attempted to move, there was a pain—a numbness, that kept him to his chair. He looked alarmed.

"Am I—can I be—paralyzed?" he asked with hesitation.

"No," said Uncle Timothy; "but there is something very wrong in the nervous system."

"Ah, yes! Any shock? Do not hint at paralysis—to others—I should prefer not."

Mr. Barnard rang the bell, and desired the servant who came to stay with his master, whilst he went to the little apothecary's shop in Anna's room, to prepare some medicine. He got upstairs with some difficulty, as he rarely went about in strange places without a guide. His sight, though better, was still imperfect.

Jessie, recollecting alone that it was a case of illness, took the medicine downstairs. Anna appeared to be sleeping: at all events she was composed and quiet. Mr. Michelson took the medicine with a surprised and somewhat grateful look. He made an effort at polite thanks, but Jessie said she hoped he would allow her to see to his medicines, because she was so used to it. Circumstances were taking the proud, hard heart by storm. "Those Burtons! What was there in those Burtons? They

were always brought before him without any effort either on their part or his own!" He almost thought these very words as he looked into Jessie's kind face, and took the medicine.

Mr. Michelson did not recover from this attack as speedily as from the last. He was unable to walk much, and the giddiness in his head returned at intervals. Little Chatham was invaluable, and his grandfather could scarcely allow him to be out of his sight. The truth was, he was nervous alone, and the dread of paralysis was so great, that he could not bear to be without company. By degrees he managed to have Mr. Barnard a great deal with him; and as they were both men of varied information, they got on very well together. He was astonished and amused at the simplicity of Uncle Timothy, and sometimes impressed by the deep tone of his religious opinions, which were not long at a time repressed. As to himself, although he had managed to keep up the appearance of religion, he had none at heart. He was pained when he compared his own isolation with the position of that bachelor uncle, who had, from mere generosity and goodness, drawn around him ties so strong, that nothing but death could sever them. He even dreaded the return of his only son, and scarcely knew whether to be really glad that he was

alive, after all, because their meeting must be so painful and unnatural, if they met at all. Poor man! it was no easy task to nurse and wait upon him during those few weeks of querulous, impatient, and ill-supported indisposition.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"L'on revient toujours
A ses premiers amours."

During those few weeks other matters began to mend. Anna was better. It was still doubtful whether she might not go into a consumption; and quite certain that if she recovered, recovery must be very slow. But she now took such pains to get better, and attended so precisely to her uncle's orders, that there was hope. By degrees all that had happened was revealed to her. She read Chatham's letter, in which he expressed his hope that he might eat his Christmas dinner with her at Fairfield. She heard, with much trouble, and even annoyance, that she was ill at Michelson Hall: like her aunt, she could not bear to be indebted to its owner. Her constant question was, "When shall I be able to go home?" She felt no wish to be reconciled to the man who had renounced her husband, and denounced her. She could not bear that little Chatham should be con-

taminated by him. She was too weak to be reasoned with, so they let her have her way, and said little of Mr. Michelson. That gentleman began to walk out, and Anna to sit up, about the same time. They were neither of them very patient convalescents, but Uncle Timothy and Jessie nursed and doctored them indefatigably, and they were both grateful; Anna warmly and audibly so, Mr. Michelson silently and wonderingly. He could not understand the feeling that was springing up in his heart; but "love begets love."

Little Chatham was daily admitted to see his mamma, and daily repeated to his grandfather in the evening what he had heard in the afternoon.

"Mamma says that now she is better, she must go back to Fairfield," he began one day.

"To Fairfield? Why cannot she stay here?"

"She said she did not like living on your bounty. I told her you loved Papa and her now, but she only kissed me, and told me I knew nothing about it."

"Go and ask your aunt if she would kindly give me five minutes' conversation."

Chatham went.

"What am I to do?" continued Mr. Michelson in soliloquy; "if they go away, I shall not be half attended to, and this partial reconciliation will be

all over. When Chatham comes back there will be the whole thing to do again. I really like Miss Burton and Mr. Barnard, and I could not do without the little fellow now. As to Miss Annabella, I can never take to her again—insolent, imperious young woman!—still, there may be the appearance of civility. And I must find out more concerning that wonderful Tiny. And my son! Now I know that he is alive, I dread his return. But what shall I do with myself, if I am wholly confined to my chair or bed? I must have some one to nurse me, and amongst so many soft hearts they may spare me one. I never before conceived the horrors of being alone in the world."

Enter Jessie.

"Ah! Miss Burton. I hope you will excuse my troubling you, but my little grandson tells me that his mamma is thinking of returning to Fairfield."

"She does not like trespassing on your kindness," said Jessie, blushing as she remembered the real cause of her anxiety to leave the Hall.

"I think I understand her," said Mr. Michelson grandly; "but after what has lately happened, here must be no more of this kind of thing amongst us. I intend receiving my son here as usual, and I expect his wife—"

Here Mr. Michelson broke off abruptly, and put his hand to his head. It was remarkable that since the last attack, his power of pursuing a conversation had diminished, and he seemed to lose his memory.

"I understand," said Jessie readily; "you are very kind, and I hope that we may be all grateful for your intentions."

"Thank you. Where was I? Yes, that is it. Do you think your sister would see me? I am quite restored, and she is better."

"I will ask my uncle, and if he approves, I will name the subject to Anna."

"At once, perhaps, so that I may see her to-morrow."

"I will mention it to my uncle at once."

"Did you not say that you expected your sister-in-law here shortly?"

"Yes; she will come, with your permission, in my place for a day or two, as I am obliged to go home."

"But what shall we do without you? Do you know any one at all like your sister-in-law?"

"Not at present. I used to fancy her rather like Miss Rutherford."

"Ah! but Miss Rutherford had no relations in England. Who was your sister-in-law?"

"A ward of my uncle's."

Jessie blushed. She always did when there was mystery.

"Did you know her relations?"

"No. I believe she is an orphan; but we seldom talk of her friends to any one."

This was so unmistakable, that even Mr. Michelson could push it no further.

"Then you will kindly ask about your sister?" he added.

"Yes, I will go at once."

No sooner did Jessie appear in Anna's room, than Anna exclaimed—

"Jessie, how red you look! I am sure the great Sultan must have been complimenting you. Does he want you to marry him now? That would be a consummation!"

This was Anna's first attempt at raillery, and Jessie hailed it as a good sign.

"You would be my mother-in-law, then! Uncle Timothy declares the Mogul has taken quite a fancy to you. But tell me exactly what he said. Did he tell you he meant to marry you, as he did me?"

"I fancy he feels too ill to think about marriage. Little Chatham had told him that you were talking of going to Fairfield."

"I dare say he added—because I would not be further indebted to him. I hope he did."

"Oh, Anna!"

"The old leaven, Jessie. I feel so much lighter and better today, so don't be angry. But what did he say?"

"Why, actually, that when you were sufficiently recovered, he should like to see you."

"Me! we should fight, in five minutes."

"I do not think you would; he is so altered: he is really grown quite pleasant."

"Well, nothing will alter you, my best sister. You see everything *couleur de rose* still, in spite of all these years, that have jaundiced my eyes. I really think I should like to see Mr. Michelson. Only he would kill me, if he alluded to the past, because we should be sure to quarrel. Is he as pompous as he used to be? I remember when I thought him the very acme of perfection, and was so vain of his admiring me, that I believe, had he asked me properly, and had there been no Chatham, I should have married him."

"If you see him, Anna, you must recollect that he is your husband's father, and an old man."

"Do you think he looks upon himself in either of those lights? He must be greatly altered if he does."

"He was very kind in allowing you to be brought here, when it would have been your death to have been taken home, and to have so many persons in his house, whom he disliked quite as much as we disliked him."

"You are right, Jessie. Well, I will see him if I may; but I feel suddenly quite weak again. I wonder whether I shall live to see Chatham; and whether, if I live, I shall ever be like you. I have had lessons enough. Oh, my darling little Anna! I can never be happy again."

Jessie was at her sister's side with jelly, in a moment, and ordered perfect quiet. Anna's short-lived strength and excitement had been already too much for her, so it was evident that she could not see Mr. Michelson that day.

Uncle Timothy was of opinion that the sooner the dreaded but necessary interview was over, the better, and Jessie accordingly told Mr. Michelson, that if Anna was well enough, she would be glad to see him on the morrow. This determination caused more excitement to both the invalids than they chose to allow, and recalled, very forcibly, their last interview, when that unprecedented proposal was made, and so scornfully rejected. Each thought of this alone, and of what the other must think. The desire of pleasing, personally, is very

strong in most natures, but stronger in some than others. Handsome people have it, frequently, well developed. They are admired once: they know it, and wish to be so always. If old-age, or sickness, or sorrow bereaves them of their beauty, they fancy all their power is gone, and with it the great charm of their life, since those who cared for them before, will care for them no longer. They look upon themselves as faded flowers, and would fain, like them, drop out of sight. Handsome men are as vain as handsome women: often more so. The first crow's-foot, the first grey hair, is quite as disagreeable to the stronger as to the weaker vessel.

Thus it was with Mr. Michelson and Anna. Both had been handsome when they last met. What were they now? Could they make the same impression on each other now as then? It was curious that, in spite of all other events, that had proved and might still prove so momentous to each, this was the feeling uppermost in their minds. It might be a sudden joining of the broken link of association between them, that had been snapped when they were in the zenith of their vanity and good looks. Whatever the cause, these were the effects.

Mr. Michelson was seen before his glass, brush-

ing and clipping hair and whiskers, arranging his attire, peering into his wrinkles, and involuntarily sighing over the changes of years. The old beau wished to be the young one, and, not being able to effect the metamorphosis, swore at his valet, and upset the *eau de millefleurs* that he was pouring on his pocket-handkerchief.

Anna, on the other hand, insisted on having the glass brought to her, for the first time since her illness. She had been contented to be dressed and undressed as Jessie willed hitherto, but now she must superintend her own toilet. Leaning back in the easy-chair, attired in a white dressing-gown, she looked at herself for the first time for many weeks.

"Oh! what a haggard, pale, miserable wretch I look!" were her first words. "Jessie, this cannot be my own real self! It is impossible that I could see any one, looking such an object."

"My dear Anna, let us thank God that you are better," said Jessie with a deep sigh.

"Yes—I do—I do—but . . . . what will Chatham think?" Anna burst into tears. In a few moments she laughed. "Jessie, can you forgive such folly? Two or three months ago I cut off all my hair, because I thought I should never care for anything earthly again: and now, in spite of

all my trials, I am crying because I am not as handsome as I was twenty years ago."

Both Jessie and her uncle had perceived with pain that since Anna had been getting a little better, she had been very excitable. The unnatural calm was gone, it is true, but the equally unnatural excitement was still more dangerous.

"The fact is," continued Anna, "I am sure that the Mogul will not like me for a daughter-in-law, if I have lost my good looks. I declare I am not even an interesting-looking invalid. Chatham would never bear to see me in this state."

Anna was mistaken in her notions, for although she had lost the bright colour that used to flash through her skin, she was quite as captivating without it, as she reclined negligently in her white, flowing *robe-de-chambre*. The very becoming little morning-cap that Louisa had sent her, had been carefully put on by Jessie, and the pale cheeks beneath, contrasted with the long black lashes, proved that the beauty was a beauty still, in spite of sickness.

Even Jessie was anxious about the result of this interview, and entreated Anna to behave well, if only for the sake of her husband and child.

"I am sure it is more incumbent upon me to look well. He never, in my best days, cared for

anything but my looks. Now, if the dressing-room is ready, I can be wheeled in, and the grand Sultan may attend my levee. Jessie! is it not strange that my spirits should have returned so soon? I hate myself for them; and yet I am always thinking of those children of mine in heaven."

"Now, dearest Anna, do be composed. Remember, all must be right against Chatham comes."

This was the surest way of quieting her, and she allowed herself to be wheeled, in the easy-chair, into the cheerful dressing-room that had been prepared for her, without further remark. Both Uncle Timothy and Jessie remained at her request, and they awaited the august arrival with such patience as they could muster. Poor Anna had a very bright flush on her cheek when the dreaded step was heard, and would have felt more hopeful had she looked in the glass at that moment.

Mr. Michelson is duly announced by the housekeeper. The first thing Anna saw was a splendid bouquet of flowers, the very last and best that the greenhouse afforded. This little touch of gallantry, and the slight, not-to-be-overcome difficulty in walking that Anna perceived in her old admirer, quite upset her. There was first a hysterical laugh,

which ended in very decided tears. Perhaps, had she tried her utmost powers of pleasing, she would not have managed so well. Mr. Michelson took her hand, laid the bouquet by her on the little table, and sat down on the chair placed for him by her side. Both were silent for a little time. Anna spoke first, and with difficulty; her voice was still low. She raised her tearful eyes to Mr. Michelson, and saw before her an old man, quite changed from the admirer of years gone by. As is usual in such cases, it was a decided commonplace that broke the spell of that awkward silence.

"What beautiful flowers! They remind me of India. How very kind of you!"

Anna took the bouquet, and played with it for a moment.

"You are better, I hope," said Mr. Michelson. "I came to say that you will oblige me by remaining here till—till—" he could not bring out the words, "my son's return," that were on his lips.

"I will do as you wish," said Anna. "You have been very good to me. I did not deserve it. I am very sorry—"

Mr. Michelson had never in his life expressed himself sorry for anything; perhaps had rarely before felt sorry; so it was not to be expected that he should begin now. Anna, on the contrary,

had always been sinning, and declaring herself "sorry" afterwards; so the effort cost her little, when once the right spring was touched.

Uncle Timothy came to the rescue.

"You must excuse me, Mr. Michelson, for saying that I am afraid my niece will not be able to converse just at present."

Anna had suddenly turned very pale, and Mr. Michelson perceived it.

"I will come again by-and-by," he said, rising; "we must not exhaust her, I see."

Again he took her hand, and bending over her, left the room.

Anna began to cry very heartily, and so the awful interview ended.

It was singular that the least excitement acted as forcibly on Mr. Michelson as on Anna. No sooner did he reach the library, than he had another attack of giddiness and spasm. Mr. Barnard was called down, and was some time in restoring him. The same wandering of mind as before succeeded the attack, and he was very feeble for some hours. Mr. Barnard grew seriously alarmed about him, and wished him to send for his own physician, or to go and consult him; but Mr. Michelson was so well satisfied with Uncle Timothy, that he would not consent.

The following morning Uncle James brought Tiny in his phaeton to replace Jessie for a few days, who found it absolutely necessary to be at Fairfield, to see after matters there. Moreover she required rest: she was very nearly worn out with anxiety and watching.

Jessie found everything as well as could be expected at Fairfield. Louisa was awaiting her with great anxiety, and it was quite refreshing to receive the hearty kiss of affection from that joyous, hopeful friend, after the weeks of pain she had gone through. They had not met before since Jessie returned from London, and there was much to talk over. Captain Burford, Nelson, Mr. and Mrs. Barnard, and Mrs. Colville, also came to see her; and she felt almost angry with herself for being so light-hearted that first evening at home, when she had left Anna in such an uncertain state, and Mr. Michelson looking so wretched.

But how could she help being happy? When the party from the Grange had driven off,—they left early on account of Mrs. Colville, the good Captain insisted on teaching the pretty widow cribbage, for whom he declared such an affection, that he had some idea of asking her to be his partner for life. Nelson and Jessie were, by this manœuvre of the ever-watchful parent, thrown

together, and they had a conversation that did both of them a great deal of good. They were surprised at the change and improvement in their respective minds. They had read and thought much during the last ten years, and they found that their course of reading and thinking had not been dissimilar. Nelson wondered where and how Jessie had gained so much general information, and how she had acquired such an insight into literature; and Jessie wondered how Nelson had found time to study, when he had been engaged in active service. In short, the Captain was very nearly upsetting the cribbage board once or twice, in his fidgety delight at seeing them both so happy. The time came when he could stand it no longer; so shuffling up the cards, and fussing about a little, he took to his pipe, and seated himself in his accustomed corner, opposite his beloved ones. This, of course, put an effectual stop to their conversation, which became general.

"Well!" said the Captain, "if it were not for my bald head, which I have just most unfortunately felt, I should fancy myself twenty years younger. That is just how those two children used to be, when we were all happy together in 'auld lang syne.' I say, Jessie, sing us 'Auld lang syne.' By the way, Nelson, Jessie can accompany herself

now quite well: you have no idea how accomplished she is become."

"She will never want a trumpeter, Captain Burford, as long as you are near her," said Louisa; "and when you are not in the way, I will do my best to blow a loud blast in her behalf."

"I suppose we should all do that," said Nelson quietly.

"It is very evident my trumpeter is never likely to be out of town, if you go on at that rate," said Jessie, blushing. "Do you really wish 'Auld lang syne'?"

"Do I ever ask for a song if I don't wish it, you jade?"

Jessie sang the beautiful old ballad very sweetly. Nelson drew his chair still nearer to her, and the Captain winked, very improperly, at Louisa.

"And now for my old friend, 'The Cottage by the Lime-tree,'" said Nelson, "if you have not forgotten it."

Jessie sang that also.

Meanwhile, the candle on the little cribbage-table burnt out, and there was no light but the splendid blaze from the logs on the hearth. All objected to another candle, it was so snug and pleasant without one.

When the song was over, there was a short si-

lence: everybody seemed to be recalling that Christmas when Jessie sang the song years ago. Nelson, in particular, looked into the fire, as if he were seeking visions of the past or future.

"I tell you what it is, children," at last burst forth the Captain, "I can stand this no longer: 'Yes' or 'No,' I must have. Although I am an old man, my feelings are stronger than yours at this very day."

Here Louisa fancied that something extraordinary must be coming, and hastened out of the room.

"You needn't run away, Ma'am; we are all friends here. By Jove, she is gone, and I have not a soul to back me. Not so fast, Miss Jessie, you are not going away. Now, here you are, face to face, and I'll have an answer: 'For better, for worse?' or you will never come to an understanding."

"My dear Father!"

"My dear Captain Burford, pray let me go."

"The deuce a bit!—I beg your pardon—the dickens a bit! which is best? Do you two jackanapeses mean to get married, or do you not?"

"Father, this is too bad; I must insist—"

"Captain Burford, I will not—"

"Nelson, I must insist; Jessie, I will. Now

sit down, and listen to me. I know what has been in your minds all your lives, and what is there now. Jessie, tell me frankly, do you think Nelson is one bit the worse, or deserves a good wife one bit the less, because he has lost his right arm in honourable fight?"

"Pray let me go, Captain Burford."

"Answer me first."

"No, certainly not."

"Very good. Now, Nelson, do you think Jessie is unfit for the wife of a gentleman and an officer, because she was never at a finishing-school,—never had language-masters,—and was never considered what people call accomplished?"

"You know, Sir, that my opinion of Jessie is so high, that if I expressed it before her she would think I was complimenting her."

"Very well. You perceive, Nelson, that your objection of the 'one arm' is not valid; and you perceive, Jessie, that yours of the 'lack of accomplishments,' etc. is not more so. Are there any others? No, God knows there are none, either in your hearts or in circumstances; and I know it, and you know it. Therefore, knowing it, let us be brave and say it; and let me have the happiness, before I die, of fulfilling my promise made at your births, and of seeing accomplished

the desire of half a lifetime. Give me your hands."

Almost unconsciously the hands were clasped.

"God bless you!—God bless you! Oh, what an old fool I am! Now I shall dance the Sailor's Hornpipe, to the tune of 'All the same a hundred years hence.' No, Jessie, you are not to leave the room; stay and settle it, and call me a meddling old match-making coxcomb if you will. There, give me a kiss. Shake hands, Nelson: don't abuse your father; I vow you have a scolding on your tongue!" and half-laughing, half-crying, he went out of the room.

Nelson and Jessie were alone, and something must be said. Was there ever so awkward a predicament? Jessie actually burst out laughing; it was unromantic, but she could not help it.

"Your father is too absurd, Nelson."

"My dear Jessie, will you say that 'certainly not' again?"

"What! as regards the arm? Yes, of course I will."

"And would you—could you—think of a poor, crippled fellow like me, and make him happy for life?"

"Nelson! do you mean it?"

"Ay, well you may ask. I know I do not de-

serve you;—but—but—in spite of everything, I have always loved you best."

"Me! I am old, and I have grey hairs,—and I am not good enough or clever enough for you."

"Oh, Jessie, do not make me quite ashamed of myself. Look at me! war-worn, world-worn, really grey-headed, and deprived of the best half of myself—my right arm."

"Well," said Jessie, tearfully but joyously, "I can at least supply that right arm."

"And you will forgive the past? All my childish, fickle folly,—all my ingratitude,—all my want of feeling,—all—all—"

"You asked me the other day to return to the time when you first went to India: I have done so. Cannot you do the same?"

"I can—I do; but, Jessie, did you love me then?"

"Have we not always loved one another? I have never changed, since we were little children."

Ah, Nelson! what a pang those few innocent words have sent through your heart! Never changed! What years of friendship, nay, he must believe, of pure, true love, has he thrown away! How has her heart been torn and tried by him! and that heart, he knows, and has always known, is the steadiest and truest that ever beat. But

now they are to return to their boyhood and girlhood, and to ignore all those middle years: she wishes it, and he will try; but he can never cease to reproach himself. It seems such a dream to Jessie, that she, whilst Nelson is thinking these thoughts, puts her hands before her eyes, and tries to make it real; with the reality gentle tears come unbidden; and when Nelson draws away the hands, and looks into her face, the red firelight gleams into two pure, honest eyes, that are not ashamed of being all the brighter for their tears.

"Shall we go to my father, dearest Jessie?" said Nelson. "He deserves you, if I do not; he, like you, has never changed."

"Will you fetch him—I would rather."

Nelson found his father discoursing with Louisa in the parlour, by a wretched, low fire.

"Will you come to Jessie?"

"Is all right?"

"I hope so!"

"Then we'll 'sing old rows and burn the bellows,' by jingo! Come along, Mrs. Egerton; you will be glad, and so will everybody else. But you don't deserve her, Sir; I shall always say that. I feel my rheumatism suddenly better, and could dance the hornpipe like a middy."

So saying, the Captain, arm-in-arm with Louisa,

flourished into the hall. He embraced Jessie, and then Louisa embraced her; and then they all four sat round the fire, and the Captain sang out lustily, "We won't go home till morning;" and truly morning it was when they separated.

CHAPTER XLV.

"To give thee being I lent
Out of my side to thee, nearest my heart,
Substantial life, to have thee by my side
Henceforth an individual solace dear;
Part of my soul, I seek thee, and thee claim,
My other half."—MILTON.

PYNSENT BURTON was sitting at his solitary breakfast, with a ponderous volume on one side of him, pen, ink, and paper on the other, and tea and toast in front, when the postman's knock was heard, and amongst other letters the following was received by him:—

"My dearest Brother,—I must begin by preparing you for a very great surprise. If I have been astonished myself, what will you be? Our good guardian and friend has at last managed to bring about what he has been so long aiming at. You must guess what, for I can scarcely venture to tell you,—it seems such a dream. Yet I suppose I must. Well, it is, that Nelson and your unworthy sister are actually engaged to be married, supposing

always that you consent. I do not know what you will think of this, after what happened years ago; but I feel sure, strange as it seems, that Nelson is perfectly sincere in his love for me, and that I am really more to him now than Anna, or any one else. You have so long read into my weak heart, that I need not tell you of my own feelings. I can only thank you for your brotherly love and protection in forbearing ever to taunt me with my weakness, and in shielding it from the gaze of others. I scarcely know how I have won, for I certainly have not deserved, the love of so many dear friends. All rejoice in my happiness, and your approval is alone wanting to make it complete. You will remember that I agreed with you when you were so flattering as to say I should never marry,—that I would be an old maid, for your sake. I see the smile on your lips, as you say, 'Very easy, as long as there was no temptation.' I will still hold to my promise if you wish it. You are now my only care. We were to live and die unmarried, for ourselves, Fairfield, and the younger ones. Rather than that you should live a lonely or unhappy life, I would give up Nelson, and go and be your housekeeper in Duke-street. But I have some hopes for you. As regards Fairfield, we have lived single long enough, and worked hard enough to free it

from the long-standing mortgage, and it is now an improved and improving place. You must take to it as the eldest son, and then it will go on, as our poor father wished, in the family, and under the same name. As to the younger ones, Anna is married, and, thank God, likely to be happy and prosperous, if she recovers, which Uncle Timothy now believes she will. Charles and Tiny are sure to do well in their profession. It is beautiful to see the perfect unanimity of tastes, pursuits, and dispositions that they evince. If this is what people call the 'artist's temperament,' I could almost wish all the world were artists. I have long since renounced my prudent fears about them, and feel sure that together they could struggle through any amount of difficulty; alone, each would fall. To work for one another seems the great object of each, and to gain a reputation that might be reflected on the other the only wish. If ever a marriage was made in heaven, it was surely theirs. I should be perfectly happy if I could see you so married. Talking of marriage, Louisa told me the other day that when she got to India her parents expected her to marry. She had no desire herself to do so, but she was literally talked into it. She accordingly chose the man of highest military rank, most advanced age, gravest manners, and best re-

putation that proposed for her. She judged all the young officers as you used to judge school-girls; and took a mortal aversion to any one under forty. She added, gravely, that she was as happy with her husband as she should have been with her father, and treated him much in the same manner. She has your wig carefully put by in a box. She has left off widows' caps, and looks as young as ever, with her nice, bright hair. She certainly is a very taking person. But I am digressing. We have provided for Anna and Charles. Peter, I suppose, is wedded, like the Doge of Venice, to the ocean. When will he come back? I begin to fear that he must have lost all affection for us. Little Chatham, my last charge, will naturally live with his parents. I shall be very sorry to give him up: he is just like my own child. As to the uncles and aunt, they are very well off. Our honoured relatives at the Grange are another pattern couple: I am more and more astonished at them every time I see them; turtle-doves are nothing to them. Uncle Timothy shall always live with me: I would make that a proviso if I were going to marry an emperor. Tiny has been writing, and re-writing, at his dictation, all his deep medical notes, of which he is going to make a selection for publication. It has been a great amusement to him, and her

patience is untiring. Of course her gratitude and love to him are very deep. If we could only find out who she is, her Present would be quite unclouded.

"Thus, I think, we have gone through all the members of our family, of which you and I were left, some twenty years ago, the heads. How time flies!—yet I do not feel as old now as I did then. There must be something wild in my nature: I am sometimes ashamed of myself for being so childish. After this review, we ought to pause, and thank the Almighty Giver of all good things for having so mercifully led us through the temptations of the world to this present hour, and kept us from all very great misery and fearful iniquity. We have proved that God keeps His promise of being 'the Father of the fatherless.' If I have said anything foolish in this letter, overlook it, for you know one is not mistress of oneself in times of great joy or excitement. I believe Nelson intends writing to you: he is so exactly the Nelson of childish days again, in his kindness, truth, and affection, that I believe the past must be a dream. Charles is gone off on a sketching expedition. Mr. Michelson wished him to stay at the Hall, but he thought there were enough Burtons there already. He will have weeping skies to sketch.

I must leave our dear Captain to your imagination: no one could portray all his extravagances just at present. I shall not be quite satisfied with myself until I hear from you. I am afraid I am selfish. God bless you, my own dear brother! Love from all. Your devoted sister,

"JESSIE BURTON."

Pynsent put down the letter, and wiped a thick film from his eyes. "Thank God, all is as it should be at last!" he muttered. He remained a short time in deep thought, then selected the following epistle from amongst the other unopened letters:—

"My dear Pynsent,

"If you have read Jessie's letter, you know all, and that I am the most fortunate fellow in the world. It is not often that I go into ecstasies, but I am really the happiest creature breathing. There has been an unnatural weight on my mind for the last ten or twelve years that is suddenly removed, and the air seems lighter than it has been since my boyhood. Night is turned into day. You need not say, 'He doesn't deserve it,' for I know it well; but I suppose there is a period in every one's life when he is under a spell, and sees everything through a wrong medium: I have

passed through mine, and, happily, am clearer-sighted than ever. I see in Jessie, what every one who knows her has always seen, the woman of all others in the world to make a man happy—the purest, truest, and finest work of the Creator. I dare say I shall get into rhapsodies, but never mind. One thing I must say, that I hope you, like Jessie, will wash out of your memory all my follies; I allude to them to you for the first and last time. My love for Anna was an infatuation. I cannot now understand how a man of my grave temperament could have been absorbed by it; but we must allow that she had an irresistible fascination. In my heart of hearts Jessie's pure image lay enshrined the whole time: you may believe it or not, but so it was. I knew that I was sinning against her, against my father, and against myself, although I tried to believe that ours had been only a childish attachment. When I got back to India, and had time to reflect, I found that I had deceived myself, and every one belonging to me; but I no longer flattered myself with the hope of Jessie; so I put her, Anna, and all other ladies, out of my head, and took to my profession as a mistress. She has deprived me of my right arm, but, by dismissing me from her service, has given me a far better. You know enough of me to be

assured that, whatever my indecision of character, I could not tell a lie. Believe me, then, that your sister is now all in all to me, and that I hope to prove to her my gratitude for her unselfish acceptance of a broken-down soldier by a whole life of love and care. Will you, now, restore to me the old friendship? You do not know, you cannot tell, how I have felt your estrangement. You tried not to show it, but I was well assured that you were changed, and I deserved it. Write to me soon, and say that you will sanction with one sister what I know you disapproved with another—a marriage that your father and mine settled at our respective births. Does it not seem strange that nearly forty years have passed since that day?—more than half a life! How little they foresaw all that would happen before the event took place. My father, at seventy-five, is likely to see it consummated. I believe the germ of romance always remains in our natures, ready to sprout out whenever called forth. I am much more sentimental at this moment than I ever was, and I look into the glass, and see grey hairs in my whiskers. Jessie declares she has grey hairs, but I cannot see them. 'Love is blind.' I believe I have written nonsense; but this is the first really natural letter that I have addressed to you for years. My father bids me

tell you that you owe him a wager: you betted with him, years ago, that neither Jessie nor you would ever marry. I advise you to lose the bet *wholly*.

"Believe me, my dear Pynsent,

"Your true old friend,

"N. Burford."

Again Pynsent put down the letter, and declared that all was right. For the second time that odious page came to say that Mrs. Miller had sent again. Pynsent was obliged to go to his patients. He came back to a late dinner that he could not eat, and having sent it away almost untasted, he sat down to his desk, and during the course of a long evening and half the night penned four letters, the contents of two of which we submit to the reader. We must premise that Pynsent occasionally tore up a sheet or two of paper in disgust, and was a very long time buried in the deepest of reveries between each. He first of all began one letter, and then he put aside that sheet, and commenced another; and so his solitary moments sped.

"My own dear Sister,

"I must disappoint you at once. Your letter did not surprise me, as I saw how matters were,

or would be, from the moment I saw you and Nelson together in London. From my heart I rejoice, because I believe you will make one another happy: it is as it should be. But I can only give my consent on one condition, of which more hereafter. It is a great shock to my powers of discrimination and prophecy. I always said you would be an old maid, as I should be an old bachelor. I like your professing to take me into consideration, now that you have made up your mind to give me up to the mercy of any old crone of a housekeeper that may chance to get hold of me in my old-age. I quite agree with you in thinking that *you*, not I, have brought the property, house, and family of Fairfield through all their difficulties, and that you now deserve to have a little peace and rest yourself. The Almighty judges better for us than we can for ourselves. 'Whatever is is right:' we find this in the long-run. Had you married Nelson and gone to India years ago, what would have become of all the rest of us? Not that I think Nelson deserves you,—and I shall tell him so. No man ought ever to think of more than one . . . excuse my breaking off in that sentence. I suddenly remembered that we were all fallible, so I must forgive Nelson, though I can never make an excuse for Anna's conduct to him. All was for

the best, however; so I suppose I must forgive her too. Women are strange enigmas. There is your friend Louisa, a greater one than all, in spite of her frank manners. I cannot pretend to misunderstand your wishes in that quarter. I meant to punish you; but I shall only please you in what I am going to do. No; I am not quite sure whether I can venture to take such a leap. But you are my elder, and I am bound to follow the example of my elders and betters. In short, it is impossible for me to remain a solitary after you have so cruelly broken your word; so now for the conditions on which you have my consent to get married. You must provide a suitable housekeeper for me. I find I am getting a rich man; my profession is increasing, and I am given to understand that I am to be made surgeon to a certain hospital; so I can now make the necessary proposition without being afraid of bringing the lady to starvation, or of being kept by her,—a piece of meanness that I should not like. It is useless beating about the bush: it must come out; but you know how modest I am. In spite of my apparent bearishness, I had always a very considerable liking for your friend Louisa. Oh, I fancy I see you at this moment! Now, don't go into fits. Nelson has heroics enough in his letter for us all. Goodness

gracious! how he does lard you over! Well, I think your friend Louisa very 'taking,' as you say, and all that sort of thing, and I want to have your opinion as to whether she will take the wearer with the wig. Now it is out, and I have a great mind to tear up the sheet and shut it up again, for I have the greatest horror of a refusal. I have some intention of enclosing a letter to her, and one to her 'honoured mother,' to you—to be given at your discretion. You see, I could never possibly propose face to face: I should either go into hysterics, or burst out laughing, or fairly break down in the middle. In writing, I should just be able to say, 'Madam, will you have me?' and then rest on my oars till an answer came. I have not yet written those fatal words; but if you should find herewith a letter addressed to that most dangerous of all animals, 'a vidder,' you may take it for granted they are therein inscribed. But enough of this. If I succeed, you and I will be married on the same day, and we will pull the old house down with jollification; if I do not, why, you are bound to remain a spinster, for my sake! What will Nelson say to this? God bless you! Love to all.

"Your ever affectionate Brother,

"PYNSENT."

"My dear Nelson,

"I am not sure that I shall let you have Jessie. She is too good for you, or for any man but—— but me, in short. I always intended to end my days at Fairfield with her, and I do not see what right you have to interfere between us. You write a great deal of humbug (excuse the term). I was never estranged from you. I always loved you; but I felt that you were not acting up to your principles, or for your happiness, and therefore I could not be quite as open with you as I wished. Now we shall be brothers again—more really so than ever. I find there is one point on which I can pique myself—I have never been drawn into the folly of love-rodomontade. I will keep your letter, and show it you in ten years' time. I wonder what you and Jessie will think of it then! You have a sentimental, I a matter-of-fact nature; still we were born to be a David and Jonathan. I quite believe that you never told a lie in your life; your father's son could not have told one. God bless him! he is a true man. If there were more like him, there would be less palaver and deceit in the world. A little more honest bluntness would mend mankind. We have a sprinkling of it in our family: Uncle James has it; and Jessie is as open as the day. I hope you admire Jessie's eyes;

now I really do think them worth a sonnet. They always remind me of heaven, so true and clear. When *I* get soft, it is about my sister. Every blessing attend you both! all sorts of little Cupids and hearts and inexpressible Valentines be around you! By the way, you always used to write the best Valentines. Jessie's letter is most characteristic. For your comfort, I must assure you that she seems quite satisfied with you; but self, as usual, is secondary. She goes through her family, and, having found that most of them are provided for, thinks that she may venture to provide for herself. She has a feeling for me, however, which you (men are always selfish!) never entertained. She does not like to leave me to single blessedness; but marriage is a fearful leap!

"I am sure I have said enough about it for one letter; so recommending you to take care of Jessie if you do not want your head knocked off by your father, or a bullet sent through you by your affectionate brother, I am,

"My dear Nel,

"Your faithful friend,

"P. BURTON."

Having read Pynsent's letters, we may be allowed to put into language some of the thoughts

that rush through his mind as he throws himself back in his chair, and half shuts his eyes.

"*L'on revient toujours à ses premiers amours* was a sentiment I once learnt. I wonder whether anybody in the world knows who his first love was? Yes, I believe Jessie does. Everybody else seems to have had a hundred, ever since they were children. I think I was in love once, when I was a boy. Then came the other two. Disgusting! But I believe I liked Louisa the best; at all events, she is the most suited to me. But I do not believe she cares a straw for me. She is always making fun of me, and cutting up all my odd, old-fashioned ways. I know that if I were quite sure of her I would propose at once. Then why not try? It seems so absurd to begin this sort of thing, when I have so resolutely kept out of it for so many years. Still I should be dull and unhappy without her, and even felt jealous when Uncle James told me that that coxcomb Lutterel had been making inquiries about her. Had I not better wait till Anna is well? No; if I do not do it now that Jessie has set me the example, I shall never do it. Let me be honest. Am I really in love? Could I keep all those formidable promises in the marriage service? Yes. Well! nothing venture, nothing have: so here goes!"

With a desperate effort, Pynsent seated himself again at his desk. He was at least half an hour beginning; but when he did begin his pen flowed so swiftly that there seemed no end to his letter. He will not permit any one to repeat that letter; he would tear it up directly if he thought we should do so, therefore we refrain. It was signed and sealed about one o'clock in the morning. Then followed a short and concise epistle to Mrs. Colville. When this was finished he arose, with a sigh of great relief, and walked round the room. Finally, he made a large packet of the three letters to the three ladies, and directed it to Jessie, enclosing Nelson's in an envelope by itself.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"Woman all exceeds
In ardent sanctitude and pious deeds;
And chief in woman charities prevail
That soothe when sorrows or disease assail."—BARRET.

MR. MICHELSON continued some time indisposed, and unable to pay Anna any further visits. He was obliged to keep his room for some weeks, where he was constantly visited by Mr. Barnard and little Chatham. It was evident to his kind doctor that his health was breaking up, and that any violent shocks on his nervous system might bring on paralysis. He was very excitable and irritable, and appeared anxious for the return of his son, although he did not often speak of him. Mr. Barnard, as was his custom, tried to bring religious subjects into conversation, but with no very great success. The idea of death was one that Mr. Michelson had never entertained in health, and he seemed still less to like it in sickness.

It was strange that when Tiny arrived at the Hall in place of Jessie, he ordered a certain room

to be unlocked and prepared for her, that had not been used since the departure of Miss Rutherford. It is impossible to define what was in his mind, as he sat ruminating this arrangement. He always looked upon Tiny and her picture as the counterparts of Miss Rutherford, and, as such, he had now a dread of seeing either, because they brought on a degree of palpitation that he could not account for; still he chose her to inhabit that apartment.

Tiny and a servant slept alternately in Anna's room, so it was not until the second night after her arrival that Tiny took possession of this long-closed chamber. There was a comfortable fire, and everything looked as bright and cheerful as if it had been always tenanted, instead of so long unused; but it had undergone regular cleanings and airings,—only the housekeeper was ordered to keep the key. Mr. Michelson's servants had changed so often, that it was now scarcely known why that particular room was closed; and various reports of ghosts were afloat concerning it.

Tiny had put on her white dressing-gown, and let down her long hair, looking very much like Charles's Cordelia, before she thought of examining her bed-chamber. When she did look around her, she was struck with the inhabited air it had; it was as if it had suddenly lost an inmate. There

were a great many books,—some on a chiffonier, some on a small bookcase. There were also various ornaments, of great beauty and taste; chimney vases, and a selection of china and articles of *virtù* on a small table. The toilet was also covered with boxes and bottles, such as a lady of a certain fortune and standing might be supposed to require. A writing-table, with all its necessary appointments, stood in the middle of the room, and, above all, there were a variety of portraits, and water-colour drawings, some in frames, and others pinned against the wall. The wardrobe and drawers were locked, and a chest of drawers seemed to have been put into the room in addition to the usual furniture, on Tiny's account. She looked at the backs of the books, and found they were chiefly foreign, and at the pictures, and saw that they were clever sketches of foreign scenery, apparently Italian. The portraits were in crayons, and all seemingly by the same hand,—sketches of dark-eyed, dark-haired, Italian-looking people.

This had been evidently a lady's apartment. Could it have been the Lady Catherine Michelson's? and were the reports, still afloat, of Mr. Michelson's unkindness to his wife, libels? Had he preserved intact that apartment for love of her who was no more? Tiny took down one or two of the books:

there was a beautiful little edition of Dante, on the fly-leaf of which was written, "To Sophia, from a Friend;" a copy of 'Il Pastor Fido,' with the words "*Alla mia Figlia*" written in it. Some of the books were German, some French; some had no name written in them; others, again, were inscribed "To Sophy," in the same hand as the Dante. At last, Tiny took down an old copy of Tasso, in which she found "Sophia Rutherford, from her beloved Mother." Why does she so suddenly start, and then look again so intently on the writing? Because that word "Sophia" and the general character of the writing are so remarkably like the same word and the writing, in that torn scrap of paper, supposed to be written by her own mother. Tiny unlocks her little dressing-case, and takes out that well-known pocket-book that she never leaves behind her, go where she will: the torn note is in it, and with trembling hand she carries it to the writing-table, and sits down in order to compare each letter, now brown with time, with those of the Tasso. Had the words "Sophia" been written by the same hand, they could not have been more alike; in short, the whole of the broken sentences bore a remarkable resemblance to the "from her beloved Mother;" and Tiny wondered how this might be. She sat for hours pondering over her

short life: some twenty years ago she was born, and her mother died, leaving no clue to her relations. All the dates in these books were antecedent to that period; she was reckoned so like Miss Rutherford, that Mr. Michelson was quite affected by the likeness; the names were both "Sophia;" Miss Rutherford had quitted the house suddenly; her room was evidently just as she had left it. It was strange!—but too horrible an idea!—too horrible! Were it real, she could never again show her face in that family. She took the two rings, the wedding and the cameo, from their hiding-places in her bosom, and looking on them, assured herself that such thoughts were too vile, and could not be. She had almost ceased to wear that cameo, because she fancied it must so remind Charles and all his kind family of the mystery that hung around her; that mystery which still darkened her otherwise bright life. She would wear the cameo again, and see if it attracted attention. She tried to put the thoughts that crowded on her away, but she could not, and she passed a wretched night, wondering, when awake, what and who Miss Rutherford was; and dreaming, if she slumbered a few moments, strange dreams of Mr. Michelson.

The following morning she found Anna very weak, and full of apprehensions about her reco-

very. "Christmas is nearly here, and I shall not be well enough to go home," she said. "Tiny, I used to tease you very much; have you forgiven me?"

"My dear Anna, I have nothing but gratitude towards you all. Poor, forsaken, doomed—"

"Tiny, do not talk so, or I must send for Jessie. Pray forget that old story."

"Anna, do you remember Miss Rutherford?"

"What an odd question!—yes, a little."

"What was she like?"

"I believe she was handsome."

"Why did she leave this house?"

"Oh, I forget. I fancy Mr. Michelson sent her away. She was only a kind of housekeeper; he was very fond of her, and often talks of her."

"How long ago was it?"

"My dear child, I forget,—twenty years, I suppose; only I really cannot own to remembering twenty years."

A servant knocked at the door.

"My master's compliments, and wishes to know how Mrs. Michelson and Mrs. Charles Burton are today. He is very sorry that he is not well enough to see them."

Tiny's heart beat quickly as she answered the message. She longed to go and ask about Miss

Rutherford; but for worlds she would not allow the strange suspicions that would come into her own mind to transpire. She knew what Anna would feel,—what, indeed, all the family must feel, connected as they were with Mr. Michelson, if there were any foundation for her fancies.

So she kept pondering over her likeness to Miss Rutherford, and comparing those two signatures, until she half believed she was her mother, and that some strange fatality had brought her into the house where she had lived. The indications of genius and a refined mind that she found in the apartment, made her love Miss Rutherford, and wonder what she was like—where born—how educated—why dependent,—until she was bewildered with wondering. When Charles came to see her, and take her home in the place of Jessie, he thought her looking ill, and from her manner believed that something must have distressed her. She persisted in declaring herself well, and in burying her thoughts and suspicions in her own bosom. She was resolved to do her best to discover whether there were any relation between herself and Miss Rutherford,—but never, never to bring disgrace upon the family of the Burtons.

The meeting between Jessie and Anna was almost awkward, particularly on the part of the latter.

She had been apprised of her sister's engagement with Nelson, and scarcely knew how to congratulate her, feeling that she had been the cause of their long disunion; but Jessie put her at her ease by saying at once—

"It is all right, dearest Anna; all as it should be. I could never have gone to India, and a long engagement would have harassed me to death."

Then she quickly changed the conversation by informing Anna of the double wonder—the actual proposal of their determined bachelor-brother.

Anna was all curiosity and excitement, laughing and clapping her hands like a child.

"You should have seen Louisa! When I put the letter into her hands, I said, 'According to your reply to this, is to be my destiny; and I have promised to renounce Nelson if you refuse the proposal herein made.' I tried to look grave, but she fancied there was some joke underneath, and began turning the letter round. 'It is your brother's writing,' she said, blushing very suspiciously; 'he has written for his wig! Now I have it. He said he would do so, but I did not believe him. I will send it to him in a bottle of spirits-of-wine, as a medical curiosity.' 'Do,' said I, 'but just read the letter whilst I go upstairs.' I went, and sat fidgeting for some time, feeling just as I did when

I left you and Chatham together years ago, and praying that the interview with the silent letter might not reduce Louisa to the state I saw you in. By-and-by my door opened, and in came Louisa, half laughing, half crying, holding the letter in her hand. She shook her head at me in her arch way, and said I was very sly. Then she went to look out of the window, and I went behind her, and whispered in great affright, 'Am I to give up Nelson?' She turned round and kissed me, and said she believed it was all a hoax; Pynsent could not care for her; he was too matter-of-fact to have written that letter. 'Am I to give up Nelson?' I repeated. 'Not if I can help it, certainly,' she said; 'but what do you mean?' I told her that I had promised Pynsent to be single as long as he was. 'Anything in the world for your sake,' cried Louisa. And then it came out by degrees that she had liked Pynsent better than any one else ever since her first visit to Fairfield, and that she certainly never thought that he cared for her. You know I am not an enthusiastic person; but if there is one human being more than another that I get into the clouds about, it is Pynsent; and Louisa quite satisfied me in all that she said of him. She understands and appreciates him, so I think they will be happy. I sent the note to Mrs. Colville,

and a very proper letter came from her to Louisa, giving her consent; so I suppose it is all settled, except the settlements."

"How very stupid!" was Anna's first exclamation when Jessie had concluded her history.

"That is satisfactory, at least," said Jessie, laughing.

"Oh, I am really charmed beyond measure, my dear Jessie. I always thought Louisa was in love with Pynsent, and could have half eaten him for not proposing when she was with us first, but—"

"But, Anna, surely you appreciate Pynsent's honour!"

"Of course I do; only I like a little sentiment; and a proposal just coming in the right way, and in exactly the right place, is so stupid. Now, there is some satisfaction in you and Nelson, because there is romance in the whole affair; but Pynsent is so painfully straightforward. But I must not forget the Sultan; he wishes to see you. I feel convinced he will cut out Nelson—he is much more captivating; and then you will prove to a demonstration the truth of our old nurse's predictions to me, 'Beauty is but skin-deep, Miss Anna. You'll see, one of these days, that Miss Burton will cut out all your beauty by her goodness.' 'A Roland for an Oliver,' my own Jessie. But pray go to the

Mogul; what can he have done all this time, without a lady to wait on him?"

Jessie went to Mr. Michelson. She thought him looking very ill, as she entered a small sitting-room, and saw him in an easy-chair. He rose with difficulty to receive her, and spoke with a slight hesitation, but much precision.

"I am very glad to see you, Miss Burton; I have quite missed your kind attention. Your uncle has betrayed to me a family secret, and I must be allowed to congratulate you on an event that has lately occurred, which will be for your happiness."

Jessie blushed, and thanked him.

"Colonel Burford will be a happy man; I assure you, I envy him."

Jessie began to think of Anna's predictions, and to feel uncomfortable.

"You must not flatter me, Mr. Michelson, or I shall feel quite out of my element."

"I would not wish to spoil you, Miss Burton, so we will think of something else. I requested the favour of this visit, to propose a plan to you that I have been maturing. I feel sure that my son will return by Christmas-day, as his regiment must have been now some time on its way home. You know that we have not been on good terms.

I hate scenes, and one would be my death. I am anxious that you and all your family should eat your Christmas dinner here, and that when my son returns, he should find that we are all reconciled, by seeing us all together, and thus avoid disagreeable explanations. I say this to you, because you are sensible, and will understand me; there is no one else I would speak so openly to. I hope you do not disapprove my plan?"

"Not at all,—it is very kind. But we have spent our Christmas at Fairfield from time immemorial, and I scarcely know whether all our family would consent to go elsewhere."

"You allude to your aunt: I have had my doubts of her. She has the pride of all the Cæsars in her nature. She was a splendid woman: I should have married her if I had not gone abroad; but that is such an old story. I will write notes to all your family, and to the Burfords, father and son, and we will have a regular reunion: I shall enjoy it. I am so *blasé* with what is called society, that I think I shall begin to settle down into a family man. I wish you were not engaged, Miss Burton."

Jessie looked at the wreck before her with astonishment, and wondered how he could think of anything but death; but he was dressed and got up as if he were still young and healthy.

"Shall I get you your writing materials, Mr. Michelson?" said Jessie, "and we will do the thing at once."

"Ah! I see you are a woman of business. You must not trouble—allow me—let me ring."

Jessie quietly put the portfolio and pen and ink before him. She would rather have spent Christmas-day at her dear Fairfield a hundred times over; but she saw at once that if Chatham returned, as she felt sure he would, Mr. Michelson's plan would be the very best to smooth down all asperities, and to put father and son, and indeed all the family, on a comfortable footing. Mr. Michelson wrote most unexceptionable notes of invitation, and passed them over to Jessie for approval.

"Nothing could be better," she said to each; and truly no one could manage such matters better than Mr. Michelson, when he chose to do so.

He omitted no one, wording his note to each as he conceived would be most agreeable to the receiver. Uncle James, Pynsent, Captain Burford and Nelson, Mrs. Colville and her daughter, Charles and Tiny, and even Uncle Timothy and Anna, though they were both in the house, had each a regular invitation for Christmas Eve and Christmas-day; and Jessie almost expected one written to herself there and then.

"Does your sister ever hear from Plas Ayron now?" suddenly asked Mr. Michelson.

"Oh yes, frequently," replied Jessie; "she had a letter from Lady Georgiana the other day."

"The Countess died some years ago, I believe?"

"Oh yes, soon after Major Michelson went to India."

"And did she really give them five hundred a year before she died?"

"Yes, she was very unworldly."

Mr. Michelson sighed.

"I should like—" he began, then paused. "Does Lady Georgiana Meredith know that your sister and her child are here?"

"Yes, Anna has given her all particulars."

"What did she say?"

"That she was very glad to have such good news, and prayed that all might end in the perfect reconciliation of yourself and son."

"Ah! she was a good woman, I believe; too good, in fact. Would it be possible to get her and her daughters here for Christmas?"

Jessie started with astonishment. Mr. Michelson's mind seemed wandering in his excess of hospitality.

"The season—short notice," murmured Jessie.

"I should like to be reconciled to the Lady

Georgiana: I feel quite anxious. I can say this to you, because you are so good. I was not all that I might have been to her sister, Chatham's mother, who was a good wife to me. Will you ask your sister what she thinks of it? A real family party at Christmas must be a very pleasant affair: I should like it."

Jessie went to consult with Anna.

"Charming! delightful!" were Anna's exclamations. "Only fancy Chatham returning and finding us all assembled here, he knowing nothing about it. It is quite like a novel! I declare the Mogul is appearing in a new light. Aunt Betsey won't come, that is certain. We will write to Lady Georgiana all particulars, and if the Mogul writes a kind of penitentiary psalm, she is so good and forgiving, that I should not wonder if she put it on the principle of Christian duty, and came. It would be perfect! We should have quite a dramatic entertainment: fathers and grandfathers, and uncles and great-uncles, and affianced brides and bridegrooms,—all making a regular family piece, and coming in for the last act of the drama."

"Well! if they all take the invitation as agreeably as you do, there will be no difficulty," said Jessie.

"After all, I may not be strong enough to

enjoy the entertainment," said Anna with a sigh, "and it would be nothing without the penitent black sheep."

"You must not excite yourself so much, dearest child," said Jessie, kissing her sister.

"Now go and tell the Great Sultan that I wholly approve, and will write myself to Lady Georgiana," said Anna.

Jessie went, meditating on the propriety of such a letter. Mr. Michelson was awaiting her impatiently, and was highly delighted to find that Anna approved his scheme. All the letters were duly despatched, some by private messengers, others by post; and Mr. Michelson seemed in better spirits than he had been for some time, and paid his daughter-in-law a visit, on the strength of them.

In the evening there arrived notes in answer to some of the invitations. As was expected, Uncle James politely declined the invitation, in a missive evidently dictated by Aunt Betsey.

"That aunt of yours is the very goddess of pride," said Mr. Michelson. "I should certainly have married her, but—— I wonder she took your uncle after all; they were not suited."

"She must come," said Anna. "I will write a pathetic note myself."

And forthwith Anna wrote an appeal, working

upon Aunt Betsey's feelings in every possible way: representing her own uncertain health—the troubles she had gone through—the blessing of peace amongst relations—the hope of the return of Chatham—the failing condition of Mr. Michelson—and above all, his continued admiration of Aunt Betsey,—until nothing short of a heart of stone could resist. With a certain degree of childish imbecility, Mr. Michelson set his heart on her coming, and wrote another note, offering to send his carriage for her and Mrs. Colville. Jessie could not but perceive what her uncle feared and foretold, that the great man of taste and learning was gradually sinking into a state of imbecility, and that a few more attacks of his enemy would complete his prostration of intellect.

If we follow the messenger to the Grange, we shall witness a characteristic scene there, on the arrival of the second note:—Aunt Betsey by the fire, with Uncle James by her side, and Mrs. Colville on the sofa. Aunt Betsey takes her eye-glass (nothing can induce her to wear spectacles), and begins Anna's appeal. She reads with difficulty, for the writing is feeble. There is no visible emotion for some time. At last the mouth evinces sundry twitchings, and a little nervous cough succeeds. By-and-by the handkerchief is applied to

the nose, and finally drawn across the eyes, and something like a little sob is heard.

"Bless my stars! what is the matter, my dear?" says Uncle James.

"Nothing. Pray be calm. Anna is so absurd! she will have us at the Hall for Christmas-day."

"Poor Anna! poor child! And here's another note from the Squire. I little thought the time would come that should bring Farmer Barnard—"

"My dear Mr. Barnard, how you talk! We are quite as good—"

"The Burtons, my dear, but not the Barnards. Well, what do you say now, my dear? My stars and garters! I don't see how we can refuse again."

"What do you say, Mrs. Colville? I have communicated to you all the circumstances," said Aunt Betsey, passing the notes. "My soul revolts against partaking of that man's hospitality."

Mrs. Colville read, and expressed her opinion, that she scarcely saw how two such invitations could be refused.

"Then I suppose I must stoop for once—for Anna's sake," said Aunt Betsey, sweeping across the room, in anything but a stooping attitude.

Uncle James rubbed his hands, exclaiming, "Right, my dear, always right!" and got the writing materials.

"Mr. and Mrs. Barnard will do themselves the honour—"

"'Pleasure' is quite strong enough, Mr. Barnard."

"The pleasure of accepting Mr. Michelson's polite—"

"You need not insert 'polite;' 'invitation' is quite sufficient. And you can add, 'but will on no account give him the trouble of sending his carriage, though obliged by the intention.'"

"Short and sweet, my dear."

"Quite enough. Pray, Mr. Barnard, take the crest: do not seal it with those vulgar initials."

"J. B., James Barnard: nothing vulgar in that, my dear. However, I am your sarvant, so give me the unicorn."

This note caused such ridiculous joy at the Hall, that assuredly Aunt Betsey would have been flattered, had she seen it. Little Chatham caught the excitement, and went about the house, singing, "Uncle James and Aunt Betsey are coming Christmas-day" to an original air, that was more expressive than musical, though the boy had a fine voice.

The crowning glory of the whole affair arrived, in a letter of actual acceptance from the Lady Georgiana Meredith, who consented to come, with

her two daughters, to the Hall, on Christmas Eve, and to remain some days. She said it was a long journey to make at such a time of the year, but that, next to her own children, she loved Chatham and Anna, and rejoiced in their reconciliation with their father. She knew that were her sister living, she would wish her to be also on terms with her husband, who had made such an advance as no Christian woman could fail to meet half-way: and so she would come, God willing, and join the Christmas gathering at Michelson Hall. Her daughters were delighted at the prospect of seeing their cousins, and so many new friends, and were all excitement and preparation.

But what were their excitement and preparation to what were going on at Michelson Hall! Mr. Michelson was resolved to have everything grand for the occasion, and neither expense nor trouble was spared to make the anticipated reunion a cheerful one. Jessie was at the head of every department, from the floral and vernal decorations of the house, to the consultations with the housekeeper upon the accommodation of the guests. Since the Election ball, so many years ago, no such preparations had been made; and Mr. Michelson's anxiety to do the thing handsomely was so great, that he sent to London for a first-rate cook, as well

as for all the accessaries of the gastronomic art. He insisted upon all the members of the Burton family taking up their abode at his house during the visit of Lady Georgiana and her daughters; and poor old Fairfield was to be left empty, to Dinah and Will's great disgust, for the first Christmas in the memory of man. Jessie did not however forget her humble friends. She ordered plenty of roast-beef and plum-pudding for the workpeople and their families, and gave Dinah full permission to make merry on Christmas Eve as well: still that faithful servant, though important, was not pleased.

CHAPTER XLVII.

'And such is human life; so gliding on,
It glimmers like a meteor, and is gone!
Yet is the tale, brief though it be, and strange,
As full, methinks, of wild and wondrous change
As any that the wandering tribes require,
Stretch'd in the desert round their evening fire;
As any sung of old, in hall or bower,
To minstrel harps at midnight's witching hour!"

ROGERS.

THE important Christmas Eve dawned upon Michelson Hall. The whole household was in a state of bustle and excitement. Fires blazed in every room, below stairs and above. The hall and dining-room were ornamented with wreaths of holly and ivy, and the drawing-room and library with every rare greenhouse plant that could be procured. Mr. Michelson stalked majestically through every apartment, followed by little Chatham, singing and dancing with delight. He rubbed his hands with evident satisfaction, and seemed in excellent spirits and improved health. Jessie was here, there, and everywhere—surprised at herself for having gone through so much in a strange house, and heartily

wishing all was over. Anna had been brought down-stairs, and was ensconced in that identical little inner room between the drawing-room and conservatory, in which Mr. Michelson had made his proposal, years ago. This little room was filled with the very choicest works of art and *virtù*, and the rarest furniture that the world could afford. Uncle Timothy was also here. The whole of that day, poor Anna's heart beat so quickly, that she knew not how she bore up, hour after hour. She kept herself forcibly still, and seemed outwardly composed; but Jessie saw the restless eye, changing colour, and excited air, and dreaded the result. By-and-by Mr. Michelson joined her, and little Chatham sat at her feet, and tried to read aloud to her; but every breath of air seemed to each the rattle of a carriage-wheel, and kept up a state of feverish excitement amongst them. Anna reclined, amid rose-coloured cushions, in a carved chair of ebony, and was in herself a picture, with her beautiful child at her feet. Dressed in deep mourning, you saw that some heavy grief and sickness had passed over, without destroying her great loveliness. The dark hair, that she had so rashly cut off when she had heard of her husband's death, was beginning to grow again, and stole out from beneath the simple invalid's cap in short wavy curls. We need

scarcely describe the fitful animation of the dark eyes, or the hectic flush of the pale thin cheek. They still made the good uncle fear consumption, and convinced him that she would be always, more or less, an invalid.

On the opposite side of the fire, with a book in his hand, professing to read, but not reading, sat Mr. Michelson, gazing at Anna and her boy, and thinking, perhaps, as so many do when too late, of happiness thrown away. He was dressed in the extreme of propriety, and, like his daughter-in-law, was trying to be outwardly calm, whilst his heart was throbbing almost audibly.

Uncle Timothy, with a face as serene as his pure unruffled mind, sat with his hand over his eyes, and silently prayed for all.

It was four o'clock, and the last rays of the winter sun were looking enviously through the window upon the huge fire that blazed within, and threw a red glare on the anxious faces, reflected on all sides by the cheerful rose-coloured hangings and gorgeous ornaments. At last there was a sharp loud ring at the bell, that, echoing through every part of the large house, struck into every heart.

"It is Lady Georgiana," said Mr. Michelson, rising suddenly, then sitting down again, with a strong effort to be calm.

There was a great rushing of feet in the hall, and an evident commotion. A servant put his head into the room, said "Miss Burton," and as suddenly disappeared; soon after, Jessie came in, looking greatly agitated.

"Mr. Michelson—Anna—he is—he is—"

Poor Jessie was a bad dissembler.

"Chatham!" exclaimed Anna, rising and attempting to pass Jessie, but staggering as she did so.

She would have fallen, but two beloved and protecting arms supported her. She was clasped in her husband's arms. She did not faint in that long, fond embrace, but a flood of tears relieved her.

Meanwhile Mr. Michelson sat immovable. Pride was struggling with feeling. His son must come to him first.

Anna freed herself, at last, from her husband's arms, and pointed to his father, behind whose chair they stood. Chatham went to him.

"Father!" was all he could say, whilst tears rolled down his cheek.

The father arose, and, for the first time in their lives, he and his son folded the arms of love and peace around each other. It was an affecting sight. Anna buried her head in her cushions, and sobbed aloud. Her uncle wept over her. Little Chatham,

awed and silent, crept up to his grandfather's side, and seemed to wait until his turn should come.

"You have forgiven me, my father?" at last murmured Chatham; but the old man could not answer. This was one of the few times in his life that he had really felt, and words would not come.

"Grandpapa!" whispered little Chatham.

Instantly the boy was in his grandfather's arms, and transferred from them to his father's.

"My boy! my only one!" cried the father, sitting down by his wife, and bursting into an agony of tears.

Even in such a reunion, there was cloud amid the sunshine.

Jessie had written a letter to him, to meet him at the inn, telling him to come straight to his father's, and at the same time informing him of the death of his child. He had had no news from home since that event.

Oh! he had so loved that little Anna, now gone from him for ever.

But he felt obliged to rouse himself, for the sake of his wife and father. And when they all became more composed, there was fresh grief for him in the midst of his joy;—his wife the shadow of what he had last seen her, his father a very wreck. Alas! the gay, light-hearted, thoughtless Chatham

is sobered for ever now. He sees and feels, as he has never seen and felt before, the instability of all earthly things; and as he again takes his wife to his heart, for the first time in his paternal home, he knows that their happiness has been overshadowed, and that death and suffering have been at work between them.

Thus it is ever, as life flows on. Our most joyous meetings are saddened by the visions of partings that have been; our most mirthful hours are darkened by the remembrance of others, as mirthful, passed with those who are dead or far away; and our purest happiness overshadowed by recollections of trials past, and anticipations of certain future sorrows, that remind us of the brief tenure of all earthly things, and the certainty that this world is not our home.

And where is Jessie during this affecting scene? —she who is always first to assist and comfort, in all hours of joy and sorrow? She is actually, in her turn, hanging on the neck and pressed in the arms of some unknown gentleman, in Mr. Michelson's library. Highly improper, Mistress Jessie! You, engaged to a grave Colonel, of becoming years, to be laughing and crying, kissing and embracing a handsome young man, that your friends would not know! And such a handsome young

man! We have had our good-looking man in this history. Chatham has been our hero for good looks, undoubtedly. But he cannot compare with this black-eyed, black-haired, very brown-faced, laughing, tall, somewhat carelessly attired hero. Oh, Jessie! Jessie! And you let him kiss you again and again!

"I declare I should have known you, Jessie! I suppose you are older! Yes, you really are twenty years older. I ought to be ashamed of having been so long away. Nobody will know me. What sport! Don't tell them who I am, but make a kind of introduction. Major Michelson would have me come with him. I got three years' leave directly, and here I am."

"And you never wrote, and never came home all these years! You cannot have cared for us." Jessie's eyes filled with tears as she said this.

"Not cared for you! I should have written, and come home too, fifty times, only just as I was on the eve of doing it, something prevented me."

Of course we all know it is Peter, so there needs no explanation.

"But I tell you what, Jessie, I don't like coming first to this grand place. Fairfield for me! I hate old Michelson—I always did; and here we are, fraternizing and bamboozling, as if we were kith and kin."

"So we are. For Chatham's and Anna's sake, we must smooth everything."

"I don't mean to stay here. I am under no obligation, and I would not stoop to the Queen. I shall go to Fairfield."

"With Dinah?"

"Yes, it would be great fun: I mean to give all the people a feast in honour of my return."

"Not tomorrow: they have their dinner to-morrow."

"I wish I had mine now, I am as hungry as a cabin-boy. Cannot I see Anna?"

"We must wait till the first excitement is over."

"If I could make up my mind to stay, Chatham and I had a plan. He was to introduce me at Fairfield as his intimate friend, and see who would find me out."

Here the door opened, and Mr. Michelson and Chatham appeared.

"This is my friend Mr. Buxton, father," said Chatham.

"I am glad to see you: any friend of my son's is welcome here. Miss Burton, I am much obliged to you for entertaining this gentleman. You are always considerate. You will not object to a small bachelor's room, I hope, Mr. Buxton?"

"Sir, you are very good—I—I—" stammered Peter.

"Come with me!" said Chatham, taking him by the button-hole. "You must make yourself presentable, and then we will have some dinner."

Jessie ran upstairs, and indicated a room prepared for Pynsent, whither Chatham took Peter.

"A handsome young man, but with awkward manners," said Mr. Michelson, as he returned to the inner room.

Another ring at the bell, and soon after Lady Georgiana and her daughters were in the hall. Chatham rushed down to welcome them first, and to take off the awkwardness of the meeting with his father.

"My dear Aunt! this is good! this is like you, and only you. Father, here are my aunt and cousins."

Mr. Michelson came into the hall to receive them. And they all shook hands. He looked pale, and Lady Georgiana agitated, but the meeting with Anna and little Chatham soon restored equanimity.

"It is impossible that you can be my cousins, Rose and Violet!" said Chatham, walking gravely round the two graceful girls, that were children at his wedding. "Anna, we are getting old, or else

these are not our cousins, and this is not our child."

"Indeed I am, Papa; and I shall be a man soon, Dinah says so."

Jessie came to greet and be greeted, and finally to take the travellers to their rooms. Uncle Timothy had made his escape into the drawing-room.

Fresh arrivals! Charles and Tiny, Pynsent and Louisa. Strange to say, Pynsent had managed to travel all night, and to spend that day at Fairfield. The ladies went at once upstairs.

They all managed to assemble in the large drawing-room by seven o'clock, with the exception of Anna, who was to remain quiet until the evening. Tiny came in under Jessie's wing, looking whiter than the simple white dress she wore. Mr. Michelson scarcely dared to look at her, she affected him so strangely; and she was nervously pressing that ancient cameo beneath her glove, and wondering what right she had in that family party of good and well-known parentage. She was introduced to the strangers, who had previously been looking at her portrait in Cordelia.

Captain Burford and Nelson were announced; shortly after, Mr. and Mrs. Barnard, and Mrs. Colville.

All the previous arrivals were really as nothing compared to Aunt Betsey's. She swept into the room in her black velvet dress, like a princess. Mr. Michelson's bow and her curtsey were worth seeing. The simple Lady Georgiana and her modest daughters quite shrank beneath the overpowering magnificence of the introduction. Hers was the old school, but it was unquestionably the grand one. She sailed into a chair, and glanced around her haughtily; but when she saw how altered Mr. Michelson was, her eyes rested with real complacence upon her handsome, portly husband: she never admired him so much before.

Dinner was announced. Mr. Michelson knew how to manage such things, and every one was paired to perfection. The *fiancés* fell together quite naturally; and, considering the awkwardness of the meeting of so many estranged people, the dinner went off capitally. It was first-rate, and Mr. Michelson played the host well, aided by Chatham, when memory, as it sometimes would, failed him.

Tiny and Peter were the only uncomfortable guests. The former thought of nothing but her ring, and was at last made so wretched by fancying that Mr. Michelson might recognize it before all that company, that her courage failed her, and

she drew it off, and hid it in her glove. She looked so ill and nervous, that every one pitied her, and Charles felt quite unhappy. As to Peter, he would have got on famously with Rose and Violet, one on each side of him, but he chanced to have Pynsent opposite, who did nothing but look at him. Louisa declared that Pynsent had not a word to say to her, and threatened to complain to Jessie.

"I beg your pardon, but I cannot help looking at that gentleman opposite," said Pynsent; "I am sure I have seen him before, but cannot remember where. His laugh reminds me of some one also."

"He is very like Anna," said Louisa.

Peter said something about the sea to his pretty neighbour, which caught Captain Burford's ear, on the other side.

"You are a sailor, like myself, I fancy," said the Captain.

"Yes, I am one of the jolly tars of Old England," was the reply.

"I must shake hands with you after dinner," said the Captain heartily.

As he spoke loud, all eyes were drawn upon Peter; and Uncle James indulged in such a stare, that Aunt Betsey was obliged to address him, to distract his attention.

"Did you ever chance to fall in with a nevvy of mine—Lieutenant Barton, of the 'Bonne Espérance'?" asked Uncle James, across the table.

"Yes—no—not exactly," said Peter.

The ladies were just leaving the dinner-table.

"I dare say you never did," roared Uncle James, rising abruptly, and almost pulling the dessert off the table. He did upset two glasses of wine, and overturned a pyramid of oranges. "I dare say you never did; and you are not that very identical nevvy, I suppose, that used to be the torment of my life?"

Here Uncle James reached Peter; and, as was his wont, greeted him with a heavy slap upon the back, and then shook hands with him till he nearly wrung the hand off. "You young rascal! you didn't deceive me long. I knew the wicked eyes, and the father's voice!"

There was a great confusion. All the friends crowded round Peter, shaking hands by turns, asking questions, and making the dining-room resound with laughter and delight.

We have forgotten to say that Jessie waylaid Nelson and Louisa, and let them into the secret, so they greeted Peter as Mr. Buxton, an Indian acquaintance.

Even Aunt Betsey forgot her dignity, and actu-

ally embraced her favourite nephew before all the company.

"This is a new sister," said Pynsent, leading the shrinking Tiny up to Peter.

"I suppose I must not kiss her in public?" whispered Peter, taking her hand; "but it is only a pleasure in reserve. I want to know, Charles, what right you had to marry before me. I am the only genuine bachelor in the family. Uncle James, who would have supposed that you could have deserted the brotherhood?"

"Haw! haw! haw!—too proud, Nevvy, too proud."

"My dear Mr. Barnard!" from Aunt Betsey. "Mr. Michelson, we must really apologize for this scene," she added, grandly approaching her former admirer.

"Mr. Michelson," broke in Peter, "it was not my fault. I beg your pardon for causing such an uproar, but Chatham would have it so. Where is he? That is too bad; he has left me to bear all the odium of getting up a scene by myself."

"Allow me to shake hands with you," said Mr. Michelson, "and welcome you home. I remember you would not come near me when I saw you last."

"I was always a rebellious fellow," said Peter, blushing at the remembrance of his pride.

Jessie was crying, and Lady Georgiana felt her eyes sympathetically moist, as she and Nelson stood on each side of her. The young ladies were looking with pleased countenances from one to the other of the happy family.

"Where are my children?" said Mr. Michelson.

Tiny involuntarily pressed the ring, and turned paler than before. Alas! poor Tiny!—the only anxious heart in all that joyous party.

"Here we are, Grandpapa!" cried little Chatham, throwing open the door to admit his father, who was wheeling Anna into the room in her chair of state, accompanied by Uncle Timothy, who had declined dining with the party upon plea of his imperfect sight. Tiny was at Uncle Timothy's side in a moment, to lead him, if necessary, and to find certain refuge in his fatherly love.

"This excitement will kill Anna," whispered Pynsent to Louisa, as the brother and sister met; and Peter hung over her chair, and kissed her.

"And you are my uncle? and I stayed up to see you; Papa said so!" broke in little Chatham.

"I thank God for being allowed to see this day," said Uncle Timothy emphatically, pressing Peter's hand. "All is unity and peace, and not one of you is lost."

Tiny clung to Uncle Timothy's arm. It was strange that she felt at home with no one else that day, not even with her husband: she could look no one else in the face, she had such an awful secret on her heart.

"Now I must propose that the ladies all sit down again, and that we return to the ancient custom of drinking healths, even in their presence," said Mr. Michelson; "Lady Georgiana, Mrs. Barnard, will you consent?"

Both ladies smiled approval in their different ways, and Mr. Michelson proposed the healths of the Indian wanderers by sea and land, Lieutenant Burton, and his own son; adding, in a trembling voice, "a hearty welcome home." In spite of Mrs. Barnard's look of severe reproof, Uncle James began a regular "Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!" which Captain Burford took up, and the rest echoed right merrily. It was so infectious, that the servants rushed out of their own provinces into the hall, and gave a cheer for Major Michelson and their future lord and master. Could such a thing be in that refined mansion? Truly yes, and healths continued to be drunk, and speeches made, until every one present had been well toasted, and roasted too.

Chatham made a very touching little speech, in which he alluded to the mingled cup of extreme

happiness and sorrow that he had tasted that day; the joy of meeting all he loved best in the world, under his father's roof; and the hope that he should be a wiser and a better man for the future.

There were not many dry eyes in the room whilst he spoke, and Peter's mirthful voice and joyous manner were very necessary to restore anything like mirth. He declared that he had suddenly stumbled upon a party of relations so considerable, that he scarcely knew where the relationship began or ended; the more especially, as those who were not now actually his connections were about to admit him to that honour; therefore he proposed the healths of all affianced lovers, whether in Somersetshire or Timbuctoo.

Jessie and Louisa blushed very much. Captain Burford looked at Nelson, Uncle James looked at Pynsent; but neither seemed much inclined to return thanks.

"May I be permitted to couple 'the Army' with the toast?" said Captain Burford; "love and glory always go together."

Nelson was no longer backward in returning thanks: he managed to get through the united toast with honour, winding up with a compliment to the ladies, and touching on the happiness of the man who was in the condition mentioned by the

Lieutenant. He proposed the health of their host, after which they had "The Navy," for Captain Burford, "The Faculty," for Pynsent, and "Success to the Arts," for Charles. And so the dinner ended merrily, and the ladies at last found themselves in the drawing-room, whither the gentlemen were not long in following them.

"I had no idea of the pleasures of a family gathering," said Mr. Michelson to Jessie; "I shall hope to have them frequently henceforth."

Poor man! just as he was on the brink of the other life, he began to feel what was the purest happiness in this.

This day of excitement came to an end, like other days. Mr. and Mrs. Barnard and Mrs. Colville, and Captain Burford and his son, left early, with a promise of returning to a six o'clock dinner on the morrow. The rest of the company retired for the night, with varied, and many with agitated, feelings.

Jessie had much difficulty in keeping Anna from a fit of hysterics, when they had retired to their room; but she succeeded in getting her to bed, and resolutely refused admittance to all but Pynsent, who, with a grave countenance, recommended perfect quiet. As to Chatham, the outburst of his feelings, when he was, for the first time, alone, was

dreadful: he had kept them down with desperate force during the evening, in the fear of annoying his father, and disturbing the harmony of the wonderful party he had met; but when alone, they fairly gave way. He had returned to find his beloved child in her grave, and his wife apparently recovering from the very jaws of death,—if, indeed, she were recovering. The reconciliation with his father had been so unexpected, that the surprise had been almost more than he could bear; and the shock of seeing that father so changed, was very great. He walked his room in agony, until at last a violent burst of tears relieved him. He had scarcely time to think of Nelson. A meeting with him, that at any other period would have seemed the most painful thing in the world, had been secondary—a mere matter of course. In the confusion, Nelson had held out his hand, and he had grasped it, literally forgetful of the past. His feelings, at last, became too overpowering for endurance. Pynsent slept in the next room, and he resolved to go to him, and hear the real history of the past three or four months. He went and aroused Pynsent, who was alarmed by his agitation, and very long in quieting it. He told him everything: of Anna's voyage home, and Nelson's kindness,—of his child's death, and his wife's rup-

turing a bloodvessel, and being brought to his father's house,—of the reconciliation through these singular coincidences,—of Nelson's engagement with Jessie,—and of his hopes that, with care, Anna would recover. He succeeded in checking Chatham's extreme emotion by degrees, but did not succeed in preventing his self-reproaches.

"Pynsent, I have been useless and selfish all my life! I have been of no good to any one. I have not deserved to find my father restored to me, and my friends true, or to be spared for this day. I have been careless of others, and I deserve punishment. Oh! I have had it! That child was the apple of my eye. Oh, Pynsent! help me, teach me to be a better man."

"My dear Chatham, God has dealt mercifully with us all: we shall all be happy."

"You will, for you deserve it. How different was your conduct to mine! You might have married as I did; you might have squandered as I did. But you are happy in a good conscience; I have never known real happiness."

"You will learn to seek it by-and-by where alone it can be found—you and Anna together. You have years before you, and much to do in them. And now, my good fellow, compose yourself, and go to bed; remember, we cannot have

more invalids; I vow I will not come Christmasing to be made a doctor of,—I have enough of that in town."

"But one thing more: I must not be wholly taken up with my own griefs. What do you all mean to do?—where to live?—when to be married?"

"How can you ask such questions of a modest man! I am to live in London, of course, and to modernize the house in Duke-street, and to make my fortune,—and to be very miserable, as most married men are, according to what I remark. Between ourselves, I am not quite sure that a bachelor life is not the best; but then I was compelled to marry, on Jessie's account.——Ah! well done! am so glad to see the old smile! As to Nelson and Jessie, they are old-fashioned enough to wish to play at Darby and Joan for life at Fairfield. Jessie cannot leave Fairfield, so they are to build, and improve, and make quite a grand place of it. Uncle Timothy is to live with them; and Mrs. Colville, thank my lucky stars! is so delighted with Aunt Betsey, and Aunt Betsey with Mrs. Colville, that she is to board and lodge at the Grange. Poor Uncle James! But there never was a more willing victim—he is the happiest of the whole family. He says I am to have the Grange; so in

the course of years we shall be a colony: you at the Hall, Jessie at Fairfield, and your humble servant at the Grange. Doubtless Charles and Tiny will find a painting-room somewhere near, and Peter a cabin."

"But when are you going to be married?"

"Oh, some time in the spring, when the cowslips and violets and all that sort of thing grow in the fields and hedges between Fairfield and the church, making a natural carpet, and so saving expense; and when you and Anna are well, and able to get through two weddings in one day; in short, as soon as possible, my good brother. Now, I insist on your going to bed. You have no pity on a poor wretch that you awoke from a dream of—of —'oh no, we never mention her,'—into this frosty air. See how I am shivering. Will you promise to go to bed?"

"Yes, I promise. God bless you! You have done me a world of good—you always do. You really believe Anna will recover?"

"Yes, with God's blessing. Good night."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"Come away: no more of mirth
Is here, or merry-making sound;
The house was builded of the earth,
And shall fall again to ground."—TENNYSON.

THE following morning many and joyous were the Christmas greetings. "A happy Christmas!" resounded through the house, and there seemed every prospect, outwardly, at least, of the wish being fulfilled. Mr. Michelson was in wonderful spirits, and appeared to have regained health in the excitement and importance of his new position of head of the family. Chatham was calm, and even cheerful, and devoted himself to his father in a way that astonished the old man and charmed every one else. Anna was fatigued with the excitement of the previous day, and did not, of course, appear at breakfast; but happiness had its usually beneficial effect upon her, and she declared herself much better.

Tiny was the one great sufferer, who bore about with her an anguish that was too much for her strength.

"I am sure you are ill, my dearest Tiny," said Charles; "something troubles you. I thought we were to have no secrets from each other—but one heart and one mind; and yet you will not tell me what is the matter with you. Shall we go home to Fairfield, and avoid this grandeur and gaiety?"

"Oh no! oh no! I like being here; I must be here. But I feel—oh! quite well, dear Charles, quite well. I am ungrateful not to be more cheerful, but I cannot help it."

Charles knew that Tiny always felt the uncertainty of her parentage more amongst strangers than at home, and fancied this might distress her now, so said no more, fearing to increase the pain.

Tiny was dressing for church when this conversation took place, and shortly after the bells were heard. Jessie remained at home with Anna, but all the rest of the party went to church. Mr. Michelson leant upon his son's arm, and Tiny led her dear Uncle Timothy.

When the service was over, poor Chatham lingered a few moments by his child's grave.

"Had she not been buried there, we should not be side by side now," said Mr. Michelson, with more of natural feeling than he had ever shown before. If he was getting childish, his second childhood was better than his manhood had been.

There was service again in the afternoon. Mr. Michelson was evidently anxious to set a good example, and wished to go, so Jessie and Lady Georgiana volunteered to accompany him, as did some of the others. Chatham remained at home with Anna, who was again established in her favourite room; and Uncle Timothy not feeling very well, Tiny begged to be allowed to stay and read to him.

"Tiny, my dear child, we will go and read in the library," said Uncle Timothy; "and leave Chatham and Anna to talk of much that they might not like to mention even before us."

They went accordingly.

"And now, Tiny," said good Uncle Timothy, "I have something to say to you. I have remarked lately that you have seemed unhappy; your husband, Pynsent, and Jessie have also remarked it. Surely, if you have anything on your mind, you could not conceal it from your relations and friends."

Tiny began to cry. She had never deceived Uncle Timothy; she could not now utter even a word that was not true, to him.

"Come here, my child; sit by my side, and tell me what afflicts you. I have a right to know it, and must know it."

"I cannot!—oh, I cannot!"

"Tiny, I stand in the place of your earthly parent, and as such I command you to be open with me. Has any one injured or offended you? The impression we all have is, that some one has inadvertently done something to distress you."

"No, no. I have nothing but kindness and affection from all. I am ungrateful to be so unhappy. My more than father, I will tell you all. But will you promise not to reveal what I tell, to any one, not even to Charles?"

"There should be no secrets between husband and wife. I do not like this, I can scarcely promise."

"I cannot tell you my wretched secret without the promise: it would bring disgrace on the whole family."

"Tiny, you frighten me. Do not sob so, child. Well, I promise: tell me all."

Tiny sank down on the hearth-rug, at the good man's feet, hid her face from him, and began her story. She unfolded all her suspicions—told him how she had gathered, from one and another, the date of Miss Rutherford's departure from the Hall; how that the writing in the books corresponded exactly with that on the torn note—how that she had found the donor of one or two of the books to

have been Mr. Michelson, by comparing the writing with some that she had seen of his—and, finally, how that Mr. Michelson was always troubled in her presence, and could never look her in the face, though very kind to her. Then she said that every one who had known Miss Rutherford, remarked her extraordinary likeness to her, and that Mr. Michelson had evidently, according to Pynsent's account, been so overcome by the 'Cordelia,' that he had been taken ill at sight of the picture. She said the curious and rare cameo ring was just such a one as Mr. Michelson would have purchased, and she had been vainly trying to place it in his sight, to see whether it would attract his attention, and what effect it might have on him. She wound up with a violent burst of grief, entreating her kind protector not to name what she had said, or to bring disgrace upon his family.

Uncle Timothy put his hand upon the head of the prostrate girl, but did not speak for a long time. His countenance wore an expression of great pain and doubt, and it was long before it cleared. Tiny's low sobs alone broke the silence. At last he said—

"All these circumstances may be only curious coincidences, and they may be links in the great chain of Providence: we must not put them aside

without examining them. What we do, we must do openly. If Mr. Michelson has sinned, his sin will find him out, but we will be as gentle as we can to him; if we sin in suspecting him, on our heads be the crime of injustice. At all events, certainty is better than uncertainty, and we have perhaps the means of discovering the truth. I will show Mr. Michelson the ring, and you can watch his countenance, and see what effect it has upon him. If this fail, I will question him more particularly of Miss Rutherford, and, if necessary, mention your history. It will be strange if we do not elicit the truth, if truth is to be elicited. We must seize the very first opportunity we have when alone with Mr. Michelson. Perhaps he may come here after church,—he generally rests in this room. But we must be very gentle, as I fear for him. He has not been a good man,—at least, not a religious man: God forgive me if I am uncharitable, we are all sinners; and I pray that he may not be hurried into eternity unrepentant. Tiny, are you ready for this great effort? You must nerve yourself: always remember there was a wedding-ring with that ring, and that all may be well."

Tiny rose slowly from the ground, and threw her arms round Uncle Timothy's neck.

"I think I am ready for all," she whispered.

"Then let us prepare ourselves, by reading some of the Church prayers and the Psalms and Lessons. Will you try, my dear?"

Tiny suppressed her grief, and obeyed as best she could. By degrees she grew more calm, and the influence of the solemn Service, and the good man's quiet manner, stole into her own soul. Soon after they had concluded, they heard their friends come from church. Poor Tiny's heart beat quickly.

"Give me the ring, my love. I feel that if I do not go through with this matter at once, I shall not do it at all," said Mr. Barnard.

Tiny gave the ring, and seated herself on a low seat, almost behind her friend, where she could see Mr. Michelson, if he came in, without being particularly remarked. She took a book, and sat in an agony of terror better imagined than described. She felt that her hour was come.

The door opened, and Mr. Michelson entered. Mr. Barnard moved, and Tiny half rose.

"Oh, do not disturb yourselves," said Mr. Michelson briskly, "I shall be delighted to have a quiet hour with you before the dressing-bell rings."

He was evidently in good health and spirits, and walked across the room, and sat down in his armchair more easily than he had done of late.

"Mr. Barnard, I have much to thank you for; you have understood my case, you have done me good," he said, rubbing his hands by the fire.

"Happiness has done more for you than I have done. Cheerful society and domestic pleasures are the best physicians," replied Uncle Timothy.

Tiny looked at Mr. Michelson, and found that his eyes were fixed on her, as she sat half-hidden in the firelight: they were quickly withdrawn.

"You are right—right," hastily repeated Mr. Michelson; "I hope to have these doctors in future."

"We have been examining a curious ring," said Mr. Barnard tremulously.

Oh! how Tiny started, and how pitiably fast her heart beat, as she, in her turn, fixed her eyes on him she believed to be the arbiter of her fate!

"It is a cameo: you are versed in such things," continued Uncle Timothy. "Perhaps you will give me your opinion upon it?"

"With pleasure," said Mr. Michelson, stretching out his hand and taking the ring.

Mr. Michelson stooped towards the fire to examine the ring, for the day was waning fast. The ring dropped from his hand upon the hearth.

"Where did you get that ring?" he cried, sud-

denly grasping the elbow of his chair convulsively; "it was—it was—tell me, for God's sake!"

"It was my mother's!" shrieked Tiny, rising and confronting Mr. Michelson with a resolution that she had not believed herself possessed of.

"And who—who—who was she?" stammered Mr. Michelson.

"You know—you must tell me," she said boldly, as if inspired, fixing her large eyes upon those of the trembling man. "She died twenty years ago, when I was born; her name was Sophia; she had this ring and a wedding-ring next her heart. She wore a large Indian shawl. She had hair like mine; she was—she was—"

"She was my wife! and you are—O God!"

Here Mr. Michelson fell on his knees before the trembling and excited girl, and clasped his hands.

"Your daughter!" she shrieked, and would have fallen, had not Mr. Barnard supported her.

She recovered herself, however, and endeavoured to raise the kneeling father she had found, but could not. His hands clasped, his eyes fixed on her, he seemed paralyzed. At that moment Chatham came into the room.

"Do not be alarmed: help him to rise—something has occurred—do not ring," said Mr. Barnard.

"Pardon—pardon—Sophia!" muttered Mr. Michelson.

Tiny threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him.

"Rise, for my sake," she cried, endeavouring to assist him.

She on one side, and Chatham on the other, managed to place him in his chair, whilst Mr. Barnard went out, called loudly for Jessie, and went with her in search of medicine.

"She is—she is—my Sophia—my wife—my daughter—your sister," muttered Mr. Michelson at intervals, trying to bring together the hands of the brother and sister, who each held one of his.

"Jessie, send Pynsent here," said Uncle Timothy, as they again reached the library door, "and tell every one that Mr. Michelson is suddenly taken ill; but you had better let the dinner and everything go on as usual. Just put the candle and glass on the table, but take no further notice."

Jessie did as she was desired, and was about to hurry from the room, when Mr. Michelson became conscious she was there, and tried to speak.

"Miss—Miss—Jess—she is my wife—my Sophia."

Uncle Timothy gave Tiny the medicine, from

whose hand Mr. Michelson took it readily. Jessie went in search of Pynsent, who soon came.

"I think it will pass off," he said, as he felt the pulse.

"This is—my daughter—my wife—Sophia—Cordelia—" again began Mr. Michelson, looking at the astonished Pynsent, and pointing to Tiny.

"What is the matter—what can it be?" asked the alarmed Chatham. "What does he mean?"

"It is an affection of the heart," said Pynsent; "but his pulse is better."

"Is he dying?" whispered Tiny, as the eyes closed, and a deadly paleness overspread the face.

"Dying!—I—I—am very—well," gasped the patient, attempting to rise. "Where is—my wife—my Sophia?"

So firm was his grasp of Tiny's hand, that she could not disengage it for a moment. As the medicine took effect, and the violent spasm at his heart abated, he sank into a kind of torpor; but still he held the hand. Tiny was obliged to sit down at his feet, whilst the others arranged his pillows, and drew out the sofa part of his easy-chair, and endeavoured to make him comfortable.

He remained in this state for about two or three hours, during which time dinner was served, and the rest of the party went through a somewhat con-

strained and uneasy repast. Chatham, at Mr. Timothy Barnard's request, took his father's place at table, and Mr. Timothy Barnard, Charles, and Tiny, alone remained with Mr. Michelson. Tiny had requested Uncle Timothy to tell her husband of the scene that had taken place, and he was resolved not to leave her under such circumstances.

Thus Tiny sat on a low stool at her newly-found father's side, watching his oppressed breathing, and wondering if he would ever open his eyes and speak again. His features were so pale and convulsed that she fancied he was dying, and all Uncle Timothy's assurances were necessary to convince her that there was, at least, no immediate danger: the worst was over for the present. She prayed earnestly that her father might not be taken from her before he had learned to love her, and she had shown him that she desired to love and care for him,—before he had disclosed the secret of her birth, and proved the truth of the broken words he had uttered concerning her and her mother. Those were hours of mortal agony for the poor daughter, and scarcely less so for her husband, who tried by whispered words of affection to soothe her troubled spirit.

At last Mr. Michelson's eyes unclosed, and rested at once upon Tiny.

"Sophia!" was his first word, "you are there;" and he pressed Tiny's hand tightly.

He moved a little, and perceived Charles, who appeared to awaken his mind to some other subject.

"Ah, those pictures! That Cordelia was my daughter—your wife. You were generous to marry an unknown girl—but all the Burtons are generous."

He was evidently regaining his intellect, and the watchers listened attentively. Uncle Timothy drew near to feel his pulse.

"That other draught, Charles," he said.

Charles got it, and gave it to Tiny, from whom Mr. Michelson at once took it.

"Mr. Barnard, you are very good—too good—better than I deserve. You have been a father to my Sophia: yes, her name is Sophia. My mind is clear now, and I am better. My child, can you forgive me? I loved your mother,—yes, I loved her; and you will love me for her sake."

Tiny embraced her father, and her tears fell upon his face.

"Now, Mr. Barnard, tell me how and where you found this child and her mother."

Mr. Barnard related the story of Tiny's birth, and her mother's death.

"Will you call Chatham?" cried Mr. Michelson,—"my son? Good God! what a sinner I have been! I shall never be forgiven—never. I have killed my wife—alienated my son—renounced my child. I must make what reparation I can. Bring them all here—all—all—quick! Go, Sir, bring them all!—aunts, uncles, brothers, friends—all who know this child, and have given her the love and protection that I refused her. Do not hesitate, Chatham: I can bear it now. Let all who are in the next room come here; bring your wife also: every one must acknowledge her."

Uncle Timothy signed to Chatham to obey his father, who was in a state of great excitement. The worthy doctor knew that it was possible for the desire to do justice to decrease as the sudden excitement decreased, and he was anxious to have all made clear whilst the inclination lasted.

The library was soon filled with wondering guests, who grouped themselves in different parts of the room, some sitting, some standing, as most convenient. Anna was placed near the fire, opposite her father-in-law and Tiny; and Chatham again stationed himself at the side of his father, leaning one arm on the back of his chair, and standing. Charles stood behind Tiny's low seat, as if to sustain her, and she hung her head low—very low—

to hide the tears and agitation of her countenance. Aunt Betsey held a prominent position, rather in the foreground, in a large red-leather chair, Jessie standing by her side, in the hope of suppressing any sudden outburst of pride or passion that might arise at Mr. Michelson's narrative. The sailor, true to himself and his profession, managed to place himself beside the pretty Violet; whilst the Lady Georgiana, the young widow, and Rose were surrounded by Captain Burford, Nelson, Mr. James Barnard, and Pynsent. All awaited Mr. Michelson's pleasure with breathless attention.

That gentleman endeavoured to rise somewhat from his partially recumbent position, but was unable to do so. A heavy frown passed over his face at this loss of power. Chatham assisted him, and, arranging the pillows, managed to place him nearly upright.

"Let me face them all," he said; "I am not ashamed of a daughter so beautiful and so gifted."

Chatham moved the chair a little, so that it was sideways to the fire, and allowed Mr. Michelson to command the whole room. He passed his hand over his forehead, and then looked resolutely around, as if to see that all whom he wanted were present. Appearing satisfied, he began as follows, in an excited but perfectly steady voice:—

"I did not expect that a Christmas-day, so much desired by me, would end thus. I hope you will all kindly excuse my not being able to appear at the dinner-table; I was overcome by an extraordinary event that you shall hear. Lady Georgiana, you will pardon my referring to the past; I do it to repair a wrong.

"About four-and-twenty years ago, your sister, my wife, was taken ill. We were in Italy, and I did not very well know how to provide suitable attendance for her. The English physician recommended a companion, and said that he knew a young lady who wanted such a situation. As Lady Catherine was consumptive, she was ordered to remain abroad, and I therefore proposed to her this plan. She was always gentle, and easily persuaded to what was for her good, and accordingly consented to be introduced to the young lady recommended to her. She was pleased with her manners and appearance, and at once engaged her as companion.

"Miss Rutherford was the daughter of an English gentleman of respectability, a half-pay officer, who had married an Italian lady, and resided and died in Italy. He left his wife and daughter dependent upon the small pension of a Lieutenant's widow. The daughter determined to assist her

mother, and support herself, and accordingly became companion to my wife. She was highly accomplished, and very beautiful, and I—I admired her exceedingly; no one could avoid doing so who was devoted to beauty, as I have always been. She was very attentive to Lady Catherine, who became much attached to her.

"Lady Catherine lingered on for some time in a very weak state, and at last died. I must confess here, with sorrow, that I was never a kind husband to her, although she was a faithful wife to me. She had all that she could desire, except my love,—may God forgive me! I loved Miss Rutherford, and did all I could secretly to win her affections; I believe I succeeded. I certainly made her very wretched, for she was good and well-principled, and attached to my wife, and none know but myself what she suffered secretly. I fear Lady Catherine suspected our attachment, for on her death-bed she told Miss Rutherford that she forgave her, if she had wronged her. I now see, for the first time in my life, the selfishness and wickedness of my own conduct. Hitherto I have lived for myself and the gratification of my passions; if——but this is not to the purpose.

"In one month after Lady Catherine's death, I was privately married to Miss Rutherford. I made

her believe that I could not, for a time, declare our marriage, and that, at all events, it would be impossible to do so until a twelvemonth after my wife's death, as the world would consider it indecorous. In about six or seven months from that time, imperative business, and the necessity of getting money, called me into Somersetshire: Sophia would not remain behind, so, taking leave of her mother, she accompanied me to England, ostensibly to manage my household. We remained a short time in this house, during which period she became every day more and more anxious that I should publicly acknowledge her as my wife. We had many quarrels, and she saw that the suspicion of the servants was aroused: she was a woman of a most excitable temper, and one evening we had a furious dispute. She declared that if I would not at once avow her marriage, or return with her to Italy, she would herself go to her mother, confess all, and live with her, until I chose to come and fetch her, and receive her openly as my wife; I was in a great passion, and refused to do either, little imagining that she would put her threat into execution. She left me in a most excited state, and I never saw her again. The breakfast was ready as usual, at half-past nine, and I waited until ten, to see whether she would come and preside;

she did not come, and I sent to inquire for her. The answer was that she had not returned from her walk. I despatched a servant to search for her: he brought word that she had been seen going to the town. I sent there at once, and heard that she had started by the London coach. You may imagine my grief and passion: I had no doubt that she had left me, as she said, to return to Italy.

"The following morning I ordered my confidential servant to go to London, and, if possible, to find out how and where she had gone, and if she had not already left England, to give her letters from me, to induce her to return. That evening I had promised to join a party at your house, Captain Burford; and, fearing to excite any suspicions, I fulfilled my engagement. I remember the evening well, and the exertions I made to appear myself. In the course of a few days my servant returned, having failed to discover any traces of the fugitive. I at once started for London, and thence for Italy, not imagining that she would remain an hour in England, if she could avoid it. I did not suspect the real state of the case, and therefore scarcely made an inquiry about her until I reached her mother's house, taking it for granted that I should find her there. I knew she had money sufficient to carry her to her journey's end, as I made her a liberal allowance.

"Of course she had not been heard of by her friends, and their anxiety and mine was fearful. It eventually caused her mother's death. We made every possible inquiry, but in vain. Meanwhile she had given birth to this child. Such inquiries and advertisements as Mr. Barnard or the authorities may have set afloat, I never heard of; and had it not been for this excellent man, my child would have been consigned to the workhouse, and her mother to a pauper's grave."

When Mr. Michelson ceased speaking, there was a temporary silence; no one seemed to know exactly what to do or say: Tiny could scarcely repress the sobs that had been gathering during her father's history, and was covering her face with both her hands. Tears were in other eyes besides her own, and every one longed to embrace and comfort her. Captain Burford was the first to move, and to break the silence. He came to Mr. Michelson, and holding out his hand, in his blunt, honest manner, said—

"All's right,—all's well now, my good friend. I am glad you have found such a daughter: you will be a happier man from this time forth, now you have made a clean breast of it. Tiny is the best girl in the world, next to Jessie. Come, Tiny, get up, child, and let me give you a kiss of congratula-

tion; 'all the same a hundred years hence,' you know, whether I kiss you in public or not."

"Tiny was always my child, and promised to be my housekeeper long ago," said Uncle James, coming forward, and gently lifting her from her low seat. "I am glad you have found a real parent, lovy, though you should never have wanted one as long as Brother Timothy and I lived."

"Mr. Barnard, allow me to shake hands with you, and thank you," said Mr. Michelson in a broken voice, "and with you, most excellent doctor. You have all been fathers, brothers, and sisters to my poor, deserted child. May God bless you all! Chatham—your sister."

"Yes, father," said Chatham, putting his arm round Tiny's waist, and affectionately kissing her. "I am proud of my sister."

It was evident that Mr. Michelson's strength was failing, yet he looked anxiously towards Lady Georgiana, as if he expected her to say or do something. Her pride, and the love she bore her sister's memory, were struggling with better feelings. Mr. Michelson had treated her sister unkindly, and this was the child of her rival! She looked for a moment at the drooping, pale, sad face of the overwhelmed girl, and Christian principle conquered. She went towards the father and daughter, and said quietly—

"Mr. Michelson, I will try to think no more of the past. I hope you may live to be happy with your children, and that we may be friends."

She shook hands with Mr. Michelson, and kissed Tiny, and then left the room, followed by her daughters, and most of the other guests.

Aunt Betsey, who had sat erect and indignant during the narrative, was the last to make any advances. As she rose to depart, she was obliged to pass Mr. Michelson, and seeing how ill and depressed he looked, and how very handsome her husband became by comparison, she relented. Perhaps, as she stood before Mr. Michelson, the thought may have passed through his mind, that, had he married her in early life, when he really loved her, much after-sin and present sorrow and shame might have been spared. At all events, he felt how much more prosperous and happy she now was than he; and he began to realize the fact, that the Burtons, in their honourable industry, had been far better off than he had been in his career of selfish prosperity. But, alas! the knowledge came too late, as such knowledge frequently does.

"Good evening to you, Mr. Michelson," said the stately lady, holding out her hand; "I hope soon to hear that you are better. Good bye, my dear niece; I am glad that you have now found your position in life."

As Aunt Betsey embraced Tiny, it must be confessed that she warmed towards her. She never could take kindly to the nameless orphan; but she might now venture to recognize her as the acknowledged daughter of Mr. Michelson.

"Madam," said Mr. Michelson, "if I ever offended you or your family, I have been sufficiently punished, by having both a son and daughter adopted amongst you. You have all rendered good for evil."

This was the last connected speech that Mr. Michelson made. As his first-love swept out of the room, he sank back, exhausted. The men-servants were summoned, and he was carried up to his bedroom. It was discovered that his legs were paralyzed, and the doctors both feared that he could never recover the use of them. All that he seemed conscious of for some time after he was laid on his bed, was the presence of Chatham and Tiny. "Sophia," was the one word that he murmured; and his hand was pressed on his daughter's, when he fell into a troubled sleep, still muttering the name he had been ashamed to articulate in public, when his doing so might have, perhaps, made him a better man.

CHAPTER XLIX.

" One place, one only place, there was on earth
Where no man e'er was fool, however mad.
'Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die.' "

POLLOK.

THERE is, perhaps, nothing more painful than to watch the gradual decay of the powers of mind and body of one stricken by paralysis. For this Chatham and Tiny seemed to have recovered their father;—*seemed*, we say advisedly, for, to all appearance, they lost him in finding him: still a higher Power had guided them and him to one another, at that closing period of his life, for His own wise purposes.

Mr. Michelson still existed, but it was little more: his faculties, though not entirely destroyed, were so much impaired, as to render him wholly dependent upon those about him for amusement, and almost for speech. His temper was naturally imperious, and now that reason ceased to control it at all, it was continually giving way. He constantly miscalled whatever he wanted, so that it

was impossible for the most patient of his nurses to understand him, or anticipate his desires. It was also almost impossible to repress a smile, at the various ridiculous mistakes that he made. He would grow angry at the slightest delay or provocation, with every one but Tiny; and when she by a word or a kiss had quieted him, he would burst into a flood of infantile tears. This grief, most painful to witness, would be succeeded by a kind of consciousness of having impaired his personal appearance thereby, and he would have the looking-glass brought to him, cause his hair to be arranged, his cravat and diamond studs placed aright, and a flower inserted into his button-hole. Tiny never forgot the daily flower, the choicest she could find; and he was always pleased to see it. He was wheeled and carried from room to room nearly every hour, such was his impatience at being in one place; and all the strong or weak points of his character, that had made his life one of selfish gratification and amusement, appeared to grow into childish strength and weakness, as he approached the grave. He still clung to outward beauty. Anna and Tiny he would have always with him, and gaze upon them almost admiringly: but the housekeeper, who was plain, he could not endure to be within his sight. He still clung to his paint-

ings, statues, and antiques, and would be moved from picture to picture—statue to statue—curiosity to curiosity—just as, in his earlier years, he had wandered from country to country, in search of them. Music or singing soothed him, but generally brought him to tears. As Anna recovered some degree of strength, she would occasionally play and sing to him; but the effort cost her so much, that Chatham averted it in every possible way.

Tiny devoted herself entirely to her father and Uncle Timothy. Charles was compelled to leave her at the Hall, to pursue his labours as a painter, for his pictures were now called for, and the only grief he had was, that he must this year work alone. He had prepared one or two small pictures for exhibition, and now set to work upon a larger one. Pynsent, in re-furnishing and beautifying his house for his bride, left him the old studio at the top.

But Tiny! She read the Bible to her father, and Uncle Timothy reaped the fruits of it. Sometimes Mr. Michelson would seem to listen—would even make approving exclamations; but whether the words reached his heart, or merely the sound his ear, nobody could tell. Alas! it was the thing of all others to which he had never been accustomed.

Still Tiny read, and hoped, and prayed, as she had done when poor Mrs. Eveleigh was ill. Strange, that whenever the church-bell sounded, Mr. Michelson would be taken to church—wheeled in his chair, or carried, a dead-weight, by his servants. With a prayer-book on a desk by his side, sometimes seeming to read, sometimes looking at the clergyman, sometimes joining in a response, as he caught the words from Uncle Timothy, he appeared contented, and even happy. How fervently would Tiny pray that the "Lord, have mercy upon us—Christ, have mercy upon us," that he tried to utter might be heard and answered, soulless as seemed the utterer. His presence was as true a lesson to the congregation as was the sermon. Some pitied him; some said he deserved his end; all murmured that riches and grandeur could not save from the last great enemy. Every one looked with pity and a certain feeling of affection on the young pale daughter, whom they had always known as the orphan, dependent on Mr. Barnard for love and sympathy. As she attended her father day after day, either in the carriage or by the side of his wheeled chair, the poor dropped a curtsey to her, and spoke in whispers of Miss Rutherford—remembered by many,—and of how she had been the wife of Mr. Michelson, and this was his daughter. They

had always been fond of Chatham, and it must not be wondered at if they looked forward with hope to the time when he and one of their favourite Burtons should be master and mistress at the Hall.

Chatham was very good to Tiny. Brotherly and sisterly feelings grew up between them by degrees, and the noble-minded though thoughtless Chatham soon won the love of his half-sister. He would tell her all he knew of her mother, and of his boyish affection for her, until she fancied she knew as much or more; and then she would ask timidly of his mother, and win from him a confidence concerning her sufferings and patience, that even Anna had never won.

It was evident to Chatham that his father had some wish concerning Tiny, that he could not express. By degrees he gathered that there was money somewhere, that he desired should be settled upon her. He had long conferences with the Bailiff, who declared that all the ready money had been vested in pictures. One day, however, his father pointed to his desk, then to the different pictures, and finally spoke of picture-dealers and brokers, tolerably clearly. Upon turning over the different papers in the desk, Chatham found one from a picture-dealer, who said he had been offered six thousand pounds for different paintings, that it

appeared Mr. Michelson had requested him either to sell or value. Chatham read this to his father, who at once muttered, "Sell—for her—for her," pointing to Tiny.

Chatham wrote at once and desired the pictures to be sold. All was arranged, and in a short time Tiny became mistress of six thousand pounds, which Chatham caused to be duly settled and funded, so as to keep her from want, in case of the failure of the professional crop. She seemed mostly thankful for this income because it would enable her husband to pursue his art without feeling that absolute bread depended upon it.

From Mr. Michelson's impatience of remaining long in one spot, it resulted that he made almost daily visits to Fairfield, and occasionally honoured the Grange with his presence. Melancholy as it was to see him lifted in and out of his carriage, no one attempted to oppose him. Chatham felt that if he had not been an affectionate father, he himself had not been a very conciliating son, and so determined to bear with his most tyrannical will at this closing scene of his life. Tiny felt that it was too great a blessing to have an acknowledged father, ever to thwart him in any way, and moreover was only too glad to accompany him to happy Fairfield,—still, and always, happy Fairfield. When here, Mr. Michelson would sit contentedly for

hours, and frequently converse with tolerable ease. Jessie was always ready to amuse him, and her simple ballads would quiet his nervous restlessness, more than anything else. Here, too, he met Captain Burford and Nelson, themselves so happy and hopeful that their joyful faces communicated something like pleasure to his.

His one great object was to see Jessie married to Nelson. It mattered not who was present, he would talk about the wedding incessantly, and he had a ready coadjutor in the Captain.

The time of violets and cowslips had come round, and Jessie rejoiced that there was still a child at Fairfield, to gather those favourite flowers amidst the fields and hedgerows, and fill the old house with them. She and little Chatham, who now divided his time between the Hall and Fairfield, wandered many an hour in the old haunts, gathering baskets full of treasures, and making those delicious tisty-tosties that are such delights to children of all growths. You may be sure that Nelson was not far off; it was so pleasant to live over again the years of boyhood and girlhood together, that they quite forgot they were arrived at steady age, and strung the luscious yellow cowslips into the full round ball, with as much glee as little Chatham himself. As Anna regained strength, she and her husband would follow quietly the footsteps of

their boy, and in this lovely spring weather would talk of the little ones they had lost, stooping beneath the thorn-bushes to cull the sweet violet, or in the green meadow for the cowslip, and thinking how like those pure and fragrant flowers were their own young buds, now blossoming in heaven. Thus they became wiser and better, and therefore happier in their joint lives.

By-and-by, ere yet Spring had lost herself in Summer, and whilst the white May gleamed amidst its green ornaments, others were added to the wanderers amongst the cowslip meadows and violet ways. Pynsent and Charles were loitering about from time to time as they could manage to leave London for a day or two, to see the beloved faces, and breathe the fresh air of the dear old place; and Peter was with them, rejoicing in his home and dry land. They even contrived to wheel the poor paralytic into the fields, and to carry him the flowers he loved. That one bit of nature, that love of flowers, was a redeeming point in him, who had, alas! so little good to redeem the evil. And now he began to enjoy the open air, and the sunshine, and the song of birds, and to be restless within doors; and sometimes he would look from Tiny up to the clear blue heavens, and sigh heavily, and even weep. Then she would try to make him speak and think of "the heaven of heavens," and

sometimes he would listen gravely; at others, grow impatient, and turn to Mr. Barnard, and talk of his complaints.

Thus time passed on, and before May was out the wedding-day was fixed, and Mr. Michelson was satisfied. Cheerful, in spite of the great shadow his melancholy condition cast, were the family meetings at Fairfield. The inmates of the Hall, the Grange, and the friends in town, congregated there around Jessie, the mother, sister, friend, and future bride,—for had she not been, and was she not, one and all? Of course she and Pynsent were to renounce single-blessedness on the same day, and the weddings were to take place at Fairfield.

We have already married so many of our friends in this true history, that we must not venture upon another description. They were married much in the same style as their predecessors, and not being very young people, or remarkably sentimental, and not having any distressed friends and relatives to leave behind them, they all answered "I will" very firmly and distinctly, and had no compunctions of conscience at the "love, honour, and obey." Nelson was determined that Jessie should enjoy her honeymoon, so he took her for a regular tour on the Continent, and left the Captain to take care of Fairfield. The joy of that excellent man may be conceived.

Pynsent and Louisa went straight to London, and enjoyed their honeymoon in an unsentimental but very agreeable manner, in that handsome house in Duke-street. Perhaps there never were a merrier bride and bridegroom.

Mr. Michelson witnessed the weddings, and was one of the family-party at Fairfield during the day. He seemed more himself on the occasion than he had been before, since the attack. He made handsome presents to the brides, and solemnly, though incoherently, charged Nelson to love and cherish Jessie. There was that in his manner which brought tears into all eyes. He seemed to be reproaching himself in counselling another. When he returned home that night, accompanied by his two children, Uncle Timothy, Charles, and Anna, he was very much depressed. He endeavoured to make them understand that he hoped they would never leave him. The following day he had another paralytic stroke, and from that time was confined wholly to his room: he was, indeed, a melancholy wreck; and the tenderest of children, which Tiny truly was, could only pray that he might be gently floated away to the everlasting ocean. There was a change in his poor stranded mind as well: it was now only quieted by hearing prayers or psalms read aloud, or by seeing his children on their knees. With his large eyes rest-

lessly seeking something that they could not find, and his hand grasping something that seemed unattainable, he lay almost speechless, listening to words that he could no longer understand. Tiny once caught the muttered word "Christ" upon his lips, and the poor child lived afterwards in hope that it was registered in Heaven. The closing scene was so solemn and affecting, that none of those present ever forgot it. It caused Chatham, weeping like a child, to vow henceforth "to live as he should wish he had done when he came to die;" and Anna to sob out her resolution of preparing in this world for the next. That they sought, and received, strength to keep the vow and resolution, was seen in their after-life.

We will humbly hope that the united prayers of the living for the departing soul were heard by Him who is a God of mercy; but truly the melancholy death-bed of poor Mr. Michelson was calculated to remind his children that the only true preparation for a happy death is a holy life.

THE END.

JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR, PRINTER,
LITTLE QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

128